


SOUL CITY:
INDIANAPOLIS' AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY
AND SOUL MUSIC, 1968-1974

Jeffrey J. Kollath

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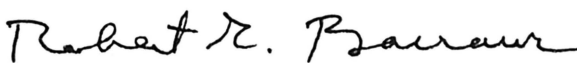
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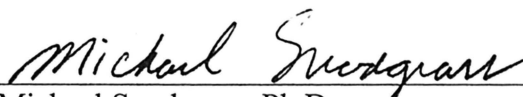
Annie G. Coleman, Ph.D. (Chair)

Master's Thesis
Committee



Robert G. Barrows, Ph.D.

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Michael Snodgrass, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Literature Review

The great American composer George Gershwin once said, "... true music ... must repeat the thought and aspirations of the people and the time. My people are Americans. My time is today...."¹ During his prolific career, Gershwin drew inspiration from the varied faces of American life: black culture for Porgy and Bess, the turmoil of American politics for the satire Of Thee I Sing and wild sophistication of the 1920s for the comedy Funny Face. Along with his brother Ira, George Gershwin not only reached his audience, but also exemplified American culture and values through his songs. Despite Gershwin's far-reaching appeal to the American masses, songwriters, musicians and folk singers within a smaller community were equally, if not more, revered by their listening public. No matter the type of music, the culture or the time period, music helps form cultural identity and strengthens communal bonds by the proliferation of "true music" within a community. It is important to examine the bonds between music and community on a local level in order to understand the music's significance and how a community accepted or rejected music's sound, lyrical message and production can illustrate just how this happens.

Author William Van Deburg examines the significance of black popular music within 1960s and 70s African-American culture. In New Day in Babylon, Van Deburg describes the importance of soul music to the Black Power movement and the culture of black America. Van Deburg views soul music as the "repository of racial experience," an indigenous expression of important symbols and messages through music that blacks could identify with. He argues that popular music, especially soul music, is "cultural

¹ Edward Jablonski and Lawrence D. Stewart, The Gershwin Years: George and Ira (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 1.

glue,” a common ground where community identity can be found and held together. In both its production and consumption, popular music provides a sense of belonging, roots, unity, and identification that other forms of communication cannot.²

Van Deburg examines this relationship between community and 1960s and 70s black popular music on a national level. In Indianapolis, black citizens were dealing with similar problems that nationally released music by James Brown, Curtis Mayfield, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye and other artists discussed, yet they had their own specific issues to deal with as well. Interstate construction, loss of housing due to the construction of the downtown university, poverty and a large-scale move of residents to new parts of the area all affected Indianapolis’ black community. Although blacks consumed records by Brown, Mayfield, Franklin, Gaye and others, they also purchased recordings by local artists such as the Highlighters, the Rhythm Machine, Billy Wooten and Billy Ball. This locally produced music reflected characteristics of Indianapolis’ black community between 1968 and 1974 and acted as the kind of cultural glue Van Deburg identified on a national level. Locally produced music served as cultural glue for the city’s younger black population, including those who regularly attended Indianapolis nightclubs, purchased soul 45s at local stores, and listened to their favorite soul hits on WTLC and WGEE radio. Most Indianapolis blacks enjoyed this brand of music, but some, especially elderly and older middle class blacks did not fully embrace the message or sound of soul. Local musicians were relatives, friends and neighbors of the people in the audience and could relate to the songs and the music. This was a time of great stress and change in the city and soul music was a key component in bringing many blacks together, both in the

² William Van Deburg, New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 205.

physical sense at club and live concerts, and in an emotional sense, as the music portrayed many of the same issues blacks within the community dealt with everyday.

The city of Indianapolis underwent great change during the 1960s and 70s, and the black community felt the brunt of these changes. Interstate 65 ran directly through a predominantly black neighborhood. The construction of the IUPUI campus took place adjacent to Indiana Avenue, the central district for African Americans and the heart and soul of the city's rich jazz heritage. Lastly Unigov, a unified city-county government, added nearly 250,000 more whites to the voting base, further weakening the already tenuous political power of the city's African Americans. Throughout these events, the city's African-American community remained moderate despite citizens losing their homes, jobs and political power. Although many black residents were involved with civic organizations and occasionally protested perceived social injustices, they rarely grew violent. Calls to action by political radicals and militants usually fell on deaf ears as Indianapolis blacks preferred a policy of non-violence over upheaval and revolution, and sought to improve their community instead of harming it. Further evidence of this moderation is the locally produced soul and funk music made during this era. Songs focused on individual emotions, community improvement, and other themes pertinent to local consumers that bought the records at Arlene's and Ayr-Way and heard the songs live at nightclubs throughout the city. With these moderate sounds, the music still unified the black community, bringing people together and helping them through a troubling time in Indianapolis' history.

A Definition of Soul

Although most people can roughly define soul music by its sound, message, or lyrics, the music is perhaps most identifiable through its personalities. At the forefront of soul music, and perhaps the most important man in black America during the late 1960s, was the “Godfather of Soul” James Brown.³ Brown did not create soul music, but he was the most visible purveyor of soul during the 1960s and 70s. When Brown’s music changed, other artists soon followed because they knew in order to keep making money they had to keep up with Brown. In many ways Brown was a role model, not just to other soul men, but to black America as well. He was talented, rich, and powerful, and he controlled his own destiny in the music world. Perhaps most important to his success, though, was that Brown’s audience could relate to him. Born in Augusta, Georgia, Brown grew up poor and did not graduate from high school. He also knew what it was like to be behind bars, serving time in the 1950s for breaking into parked cars.⁴ Music saved him from a life of crime. He first started in gospel groups with his longtime friend Bobby Byrd, and eventually moved into popular rhythm and blues music with his band the Famous Flames during the late 1950s and early 60s. By 1968 Brown had become a legendary performer, but his greatest accomplishment was yet to come.

³ Although other artists, such as The Temptations, Curtis Mayfield, Marvin Gaye, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin and other performers sold millions of records and were wildly popular, James Brown always remains at the forefront of any discussion of soul simply because of his visibility. Although Brown truly wanted to do good deeds for his people, he was also a public relations genius, as evidenced by his performances in Boston and Washington, D.C. after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Brown was always on the cutting edge, whether it be songs with a strong message (“King Heroin”), a funky groove (“Cold Sweat,” released in 1967, is considered by many to be the first funk song) or a song that raised black unity to unforeseen levels (“Say It Loud”).

⁴ James Brown and Bruce Tucker, James Brown: The Godfather of Soul (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1986), 28-41.

Brown had always been somewhat reserved when it came to supporting the Civil Rights Movement, or any black cause for that matter, afraid that he might offend a large portion of his record-buying audience.⁵ After the death of Dr. King, however, Brown performed at the Boston Garden and had the concert broadcast on live television. Brown's hope was to keep the people of Boston at home to honor the memory of Dr. King respectfully rather than venting their frustration through burning and looting. Brown fixated the predominantly black audience with an outstanding show that paid tribute to Dr. King. Brown stressed the importance of community, of working, living and playing together peacefully, and how reacting violently or destroying buildings, storefronts and houses would go against everything Dr. King fought for. Remarkably, the ploy worked and Boston remained relatively peaceful. The next day, Brown flew to Washington, D.C. at the request of the mayor of Washington to try and do the same thing there. Brown was one day too late, though, as downtown Washington was already in ruins. Dismayed by what he saw, Brown took to the airwaves upon arriving in the city and remarked,

I know how everybody feels, I feel the same way. But, you can't accomplish anything by blowing up, burning up, stealing and looting. Don't terrorize. Organize. Don't burn. Give the kids a chance to learn. Go home. Look at TV. Listen to the radio. Listen to some James Brown records. The real answer to the race problems in this country is education.

⁵ Brown was not unique in thinking this way. Motown Records President Berry Gordy consistently "sanitized" his company's records by artists such as Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, The Four Tops. Gordy feared if the record sounded "too black," the white, middle-class youth of America would not purchase it or request it on the radio. By the late 60s and early 70s most artists and record companies realized that making records that were important to their own community far outweighed the opinions of white America. Black consumers clamored for records that explicitly stated black pride, called for black unity and a nice groove to dance to. Brian Ward, Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 266-268.

Not burning and killing. Be qualified. Own something. Be Somebody.
That's Black Power.⁶

With his performance in Boston and his speech to the citizens of Washington, Brown firmly established himself as the most important man in soul music. Later in 1968 Brown further connected with the black community with his release of "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)." "Say It Loud" was the first popular song to contain overt messages of black pride and unity. Although most Top 40 stations ignored the song, black radio stations across the country played it incessantly. Brown's critical view on blackness in America continued in later recordings such as "I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing (Open Up The Door, I'll Get It Myself)" in which he demanded equal opportunity in education and employment for blacks. Songs like these made Brown the foremost spokesman for black America in the late 1960s, and his visibility and role as a community leader placed soul music on the American political and cultural map.

Brown did not create soul, nor did he bring black music to a national spotlight. For centuries, music has been at the center of African-American culture, playing a vital role in work, play and religion. Since the first African set foot on American soil, the only distinctive form of expression consistently available to black culture was song and music. During the years of slavery, slave songs and spirituals communicated pain, sorrow, anger and joy in a manner that could not be controlled by their white masters. The music kept them fortified during their struggle for respect, and gave them hope in the bleakest of times. Nearly a century later, when African-Americans faced another great struggle for civil rights in the 1960s, gospel spirituals and freedom songs based on the slave songs of their ancestors gave activists the motivation to keep on pushing and the encouragement

⁶ Brown & Tucker, The Godfather of Soul, 189.

that change would most certainly come. Soul became the voice of blacks searching for respect on their own terms in the late sixties.

At the heart of black music is the ability it has to form bonds between members of the community. Standing in opposition to European forms that “divorce life from art,” black music follows in the practice of African and tribal societies where music is integrated with other activities in the community.⁷ The music reflects attitudes of work and play, religion and struggle, common life experiences and communal pride. It brings communities together, and gives black artists the chance to utilize the possibilities of musical art to orally transmit ideas and attitudes. No other music, past or present, communicated fully the experiences and emotions of the black community as soul music did in the sixties and seventies. The sound of soul music is not as simple as it appears. Soul is rooted in the black experience of the Deep South, beginning with the spirituals of the slave era, developing through rural and folk blues, progressive gospel songs and the evolution of rhythm and blues. Commonly linked with the blues, soul often examines issues that are identifiable in the community as a whole. While the blues is more individual and self-lamenting, soul is uplifting and can be extremely positive, encouraging the listener to get up, get into it and get involved within their community.

The rise of soul coincided with the meteoric rise of rock and roll, but unlike rock and roll, soul began as a strictly black genre of music, made by blacks, for blacks. Certainly there were some white listeners. But although white producers and white-owned media conglomerates dominated it in later years, by the late 1960s it is clear that soul, and its later offshoots such as funk, were directed towards a predominantly black

⁷ Ian Hoare, “Mighty, Mighty Spade and Whitey: Black Lyrics and Soul’s Interaction with White Culture” in Ian Hoare, ed., The Soul Book (New York: Delta Books, 1975), 151.

audience. Soul music reached a larger black public than any other cultural medium and gave blacks an opportunity to define themselves through music created on their own terms. Michael Haralambos calls soul, “uniquely black property,” contending “Soul symbolizes the re-evaluation and re-definition of black identity, experience, behavior and culture. Soul associates those aspects considered essentially black and stamps them with a seal of approval. Black is no longer inferior, no longer a poor copy of white. It is distinct and different and glossed with the term ‘soul’ is worth having and worth being.”⁸ With soul, young black audiences did not have to settle for the lyrically sanitized, bubble gum pop songs any longer.⁹ By 1968, blacks had the opportunity to hear the raw, desperate and soulful sounds of James Brown and Wilson Pickett. With the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and a more open environment for political expression in the mid-1960s, soul songs had an increased role as cultural texts that carried important messages about black life, black politics and black hopes and dreams. By the late 1960s, lyrics reflected black unity, community pride and the goals of a common cause: freedom and equality.

Despite soul’s many stylistic and geographic variations, the music has several key unifying factors that set the genre apart from all others. One of soul music’s most unique features is the connection between the performer and the audience, a characteristic that

⁸ Michael Haralambos, *Soul Music: The Birth of a Black Sound in America* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 130.

⁹ Although the majority of pop songs did not contain overt messages of black pride and unity, many artists and songwriters used hidden messages to address these issues. Songs like ‘Dancing in the Streets’, ‘Land of 1000 Dances’ and ‘Mashed Potato U.S.A.’ became increasingly popular during the mid-1960s. Black artists commonly recorded songs that listed the names of cities with prominent black populations. This was a hidden way to increase black pride, identity and recognition by praising their fellow man and their ability to dance. Later, songs like Arthur Conley’s ‘Sweet Soul Music’ and ‘We Got More Soul’ by Dyke and the Blazers emphasize the naming of other soul performers to show the mutual respect in the community, but also solidarity and pride for the black art that they were producing.

stems from the genre's gospel roots. Soul performers used the stage and even the recording studio as a "bully pulpit of empowerment" to uplift and rejuvenate the black audience. Performers used gospel idioms like call and response, involving the audience in the performance and making their participation as important as the music itself. In a way, soul concerts were similar to church. The performer was the preacher, whose duty it was to raise the audience's spirits, make them feel good about themselves and to deliver a message that they could take home, learn from, and use to improve their lives.

The fans viewed soul performers as natural and close to the people; audiences knew their roots were similar to the entertainers.¹⁰ During performances, artists never let the audience forget that they too, despite their position of power, were one of them.¹¹ Listeners could relate to James Brown's incarceration in a Georgia penitentiary or Aretha Franklin's life as a minister's daughter. The painless preaching of soul artists could transform lives by making the audience believe they could become somebody. James Brown was a proponent of economic self-determinism for African-American communities. He owned several large radio stations and a chain of Golden Platter soul food restaurants. He knew the power of the almighty dollar and how advertising the positive aspects of economic rejuvenation could spark a community into action. At the

¹⁰ B. Lee Cooper, "Popular Music: An Untapped Resource for Teaching Contemporary Black History," *Journal of Negro Education* 48:1 (Winter 1979): 20-36.

¹¹ Although not released until 1998, a live James Brown album, Say It Live and Loud: Live in Dallas, 8.26.68, (Polydor 7668-2, 1998) is an excellent example of how Brown interacted with his audience and made them feel that he was not above them and a part of the community. The introduction to "Say It Loud" is especially telling, as is Brown's lengthy debt of gratitude that he pays to the audience, thanking them for putting him where he is today. Live by Curtis Mayfield (Curtom/Buddah CRS-8005, 1971) and Live at the Fillmore West by Aretha Franklin (Atlantic 7205, 1971) are also excellent examples of a soul artist connecting with their audience and making them feel they are a part of the music.

same time Brown served as a role model for black capitalism he made it clear that he started at the bottom, which gave hope to an audience looking for guidance.

Performers used the connection between him or herself and the audience to unite and empower the audience, to give them a message to believe in. In churches, when times are tough and the congregation's spirits are low, it is the role of the preacher to raise spirits and to emphasize the positive. Soul artists performed a similar role in the secular arena, uplifting African Americans through song. Whether they related blackness to beauty, ability, or determination, or promoted black unity and pride, soul songs contained powerful messages. Although the sound and beat of a song drew people in, the message was equally important. Curtis Mayfield once said, "If you're going to come away from a party singing the lyrics of a song, it is better that you sing of self-pride like 'We're A Winner' instead of 'Do The Boogaloo.'"¹² In the late 1960s, soul was one of the few things that African Americans could call their own. Oftentimes written, performed and produced by African Americans, soul was distinct and different from other forms of music. Soul set itself apart from white contemporary music by emphasizing black issues and perspectives and drawing blacks into its performance. Soul was not inferior, it was not a copy of something white, it was worth having, and blacks not only owned it, they identified with it.

Soul songs had the ability to not only make the listener feel good about themselves but also to reflect social issues of the time and direct the audience to improve their lives and their community. Most performers realized that it was their purpose not only to entertain, but also to bring to light pertinent social issues. Performers often spoke

¹² Interview with Curtis Mayfield, Soul (22 September 1969), 16 as cited in Haralambos, Soul Music, 124.

of politics, race relations, and the struggles of daily life in between songs to let the audience know they had someone on their side. At a time when it seemed white America and the government was against them, hearing someone with as much notoriety and money as Aretha Franklin say “everything is going to be alright” meant a great deal. The audience forged a deep connection with the performer, one that lasted longer than two hours in a smoky nightclub or a packed stadium. People took home a message, whether it be “We’re A Winner,” “I’m Black and I’m Proud,” or “Think” about personal decisions before acting and “Respect Yourself” as a proud individual and member of the black community.

Although a song can be “soulful” and not have any overt political or social message, Ian Hoare notes that all soul songs mean something. The lyrics, when understood, play an integral role creating that meaning for listeners.¹³ Since soul’s inception in the mid-1960s, the black religious tradition and southern gospel music have been at the core of its lyrical meaning. Spirituals such as “We Shall Overcome” and “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize” contained positive messages aimed at keeping the listener’s mind and soul strong during times of great struggle.¹⁴ Protestors sang freedom songs in Greensboro, Nashville, Birmingham, Selma, and Mississippi to keep spirits and motivation high in the fight against Jim Crow, illegal voting practices, and violence towards blacks. Musicians, many with southern roots or a history of involvement with gospel music, took these uplifting messages and turned them into soul songs for mass

¹³ Hoare, “Mighty, Mighty Spade and Whitey,” 152.

¹⁴ For more on freedom songs and their importance in the Civil Rights Movement, please see Guy and Candie Carawan, eds., The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Freedom Songs (Bethlehem, Pa.: Sing Out Corporation, 1992) and Kerran L. Sanger, “When the Spirit Says Sing!”: The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement (New York: Garland, 1995).

consumption. Soul artists Wilson Pickett, Solomon Burke, Aretha Franklin, and many others all recorded spirituals and hymns during the 1960s, some of which, including Pickett's "Ninety-Nine-and-a-Half Won't Do," received great popular acclaim. This song, as well as Curtis Mayfield's "Keep on Pushing," were not-so-subtle references to the freedom struggle that made their way onto mainstream radio stations that rarely played "message songs."

While freedom songs served a great purpose, soul songs became the new generation of freedom songs for young African Americans everywhere. Although the message was equally uplifting, soul music was more accessible to a growing audience that demanded more secularism in their popular music. In an interview with Michael Haralambos, WCHB (Detroit) music director Bill Williams said, "I have found as music director that the audience looks for more of a message in soul tunes than they look for in other kinds of music. And this is where we get the gospel thing, the roots of soul music, for gospel songs always carried a message of some sort."¹⁵ Audiences wanted songs that not only dealt with tough social issues and black pride, but also lifted their spirits and gave them hope. This, according to Portia K. Maultsby, resulted in the birth of soul music. Maultsby contends the "Era of Soul" began in 1965, coinciding with the Civil Rights Movement moving out of the South and working its way north to Chicago, Detroit, Newark and Harlem and west to Los Angeles. The year 1965 saw the release of Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come" and The Impressions' "People Get Ready."

¹⁵ Haralambos, Soul Music, 134. Regarding gospel songs, Curtis Mayfield said, "For message songs, I believe in gospel music, very strongly, simply because gospel tunes carry a greater message and they're usually very inspiring."

For Maultsby, this was the first sign that prominent black artists were entering into mainstream society as spokesmen of “black pride.”¹⁶

Although the “Era of Soul” began in 1965, 1968 is considered by many scholars to be the bombshell year not only in black music but also in the lives of millions of African Americans. The death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968 signified a stark and violent end to the Civil Rights Movement that set off a wave of anger and hostility in black communities. Cities erupted in flames and cries for a more militant stand against discrimination, supported by the Black Panthers and others, became more acceptable to a popular black audience. Cynicism increased when the brightest hope in the presidential election of 1968, Robert Kennedy, was gunned down in a Los Angeles hotel kitchen in June. Kennedy championed civil rights and appeared to be the leader that black America needed to turn the corner socially, culturally and economically through political empowerment. Hope after Kennedy’s death faded fast and living conditions declined steadily, despite the promises of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs. All the while, crime, drug abuse and alcoholism raged in black urban centers. Residents sought to escape the troubles of everyday life; some found the bottle, some a syringe. Others found a new brand of music filled with messages of black pride, black unity, and hope of a bright future that sustained much of black America during a time of great need.

After 1968, the soul music scene changed drastically in many ways. Although lyrics still maintained their communicative power, the rhythm of a song now assumed an equally important role. Songs featured African percussion and the electric bass to

¹⁶ Portia K. Maultsby, “Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 17:2 (Spring 1984): 54.

construct the groove, a repetitive beat ideal for dancing. This emphasis on the groove placed artists such as bassists Larry Graham, Bootsy Collins and James Jamerson in the spotlight. The appearance of artists greatly changed as well. Bands who traditionally wore matching suits or tuxedos and styled their hair in a coiffure traded this now outdated look for dashikis and Afros almost overnight. Songs contained political discourse with an emphasis on black identity and the positive aspects of being black. Artists preached standing up for what you believed, respecting yourself and your community, and taking pride in being black. Perhaps the greatest change took place on the production end of soul music. Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye finally gained the ability to control their music, a right which very few of their predecessors enjoyed. Mayfield created his own label, Curtom, and featured songs pertinent to black life. Many of his recordings dealt with drug addiction (Stone Junkie), racial paranoia [Mighty, Mighty (Spade and Whitey)] and the perils of street life (Freddie's Dead).¹⁷ Even Motown Records, which intentionally removed the "blackness" from many of its early recordings hoping to appeal to white middle class America, released several records that dealt with timely black issues, such as The Undisputed Truth's "Smiling Faces Sometimes," The Temptations' "Ball of Confusion" and the seminal "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye.

Soul was not the only popular black music during the late 60s and early 70s. Funk was an offshoot of soul and many soul artists began to explore the realm of funk. James Brown created "The One," a rhythm pattern that placed emphasis on the first beat and used all instruments, from the horns to the guitar, to construct a tight groove. Funk has always been edgy, and the meaning of the word funk – strong, offensive and

¹⁷ Craig Werner, *A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race and the Soul of America* (New York: Plume, 1998), 146-47.

eccentric - tells what this music is all about. As the Black Power Movement gained strength and the ideals of civil rights faded away, funk became the music of choice. Funk's aggressive sound accompanied this rise in militancy and further removed black music from the specter of the Top 40 charts. Rickey Vincent defined funk as being a musical mixture of "a dance-type, rhythm and blues-style with the rhythmic interplay of instruments to a dramatic level of complexity."¹⁸ Funk was influenced by soul, blues, free jazz, rock and roll, and African tribal music, and mixed them into powerful music that drove people closer to their soul. Funk was the sound of the black underclass, rooted in the deepest, darkest sections of the inner city, and set itself apart from soul in that the sound, not necessarily the lyrical message, served as the glue to bring the community together, producing an irresistible groove that brought patrons to nightclubs in droves.

By the early 1970s, funk was spreading throughout the United States. Performers such as James Brown, the JBs, War, Funkadelic, Sly and the Family Stone, Kool and the Gang and the Meters released epic funk records during the early portion of the seventies. These records not only reached a large black consumer base, but also fellow musicians as well. In places like Columbia, South Carolina, Bossier City, Louisiana, Houston, Texas, and Indianapolis, Indiana, musicians tuned their ears towards funk and headed into the studio or stage to experiment with this new and aggressive brand of black music. Although the records cut in these small studios were rarely released nationally, they sold well in the local market and oftentimes received play on local radio stations. With the birth of disco and a change in radio station programming, however, funk and soul music fell in popularity.

¹⁸ Rickey Vincent, Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One (New York: St. Martin's Griffin Press, 1996), 13.

By looking at these regionally produced soul and funk records, one can glean what the popular music trends were, what the intended audience was like and what the political scene was in a given city. Most soul and funk musicians lived and recorded in the same city, giving their records a unique, local context and significance. Indianapolis had a lively soul and funk scene during the 1970s and many of the artists still live in the city, so the case of Indianapolis can illuminate the importance of locally produced black music to the African-American community.

It was James Brown's "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)" that opened the floodgates for soul songs that dealt with topics politically and culturally relevant to a black audience. No longer did artists have to hide behind allegory and euphemism; they could sing freely about social injustice, issues pertinent to black audiences, and black pride without fear of being blackballed by a record label or a radio station. These records served a solely black audience and became successful. Throughout the nation small, black-owned record labels began to produce some of the finest and purest soul music ever heard because it was attuned to real issues in the black community. In the late 1960s, performers not only changed their hair from a "coiffure to a coil," but also changed their style from doo-wop or Motown-style R&B to heavy, danceable soul and funk with political overtones. One city that was no exception to this change in black music was Indianapolis, a city with a rich jazz history and a large black population that proved to be very accepting of this progression in musical styles.

Literature Review

Beginning in the mid-1970s, just after the demise of the Black Power Movement and subsequent deterioration of soul and funk music into watered-down pop and disco, cultural historians, cultural theorists, African-American studies scholars and musicologists began to research and publish works about the relevance of soul and funk music to the African-American community. Their work informs the assumptions behind the analytical framework of this study and helps establish its significance as a social and cultural history of the black community in Indianapolis.

1960s-70s Black Culture and Popular Music

In recent years, no scholar has contributed more to the study of 1960s and 70s black culture than William Van Deburg. His two preeminent works, New Day In Babylon and Black Camelot, are highly regarded by critics and scholars alike. Published in 1992, New Day in Babylon argues that Black Power helped to enhance and define a “group culture of resistance to oppression” and aided in the development of positive self-worth among blacks growing up in the era. Van Deburg sees culture, from James Brown’s music and Amiri Baraka’s poetry to the Afro hairstyle and dashiki, as the glue of the Black Power movement and its defining principle.¹⁹ The culture was evident in Indianapolis, as local soul and funk bands changed their styles from matching tuxedos and suits to African-influenced clothing. Although these styles were initially linked with the Black Power movement and militancy, they became accepted fashions throughout the African-American community and signified black pride, black unity and their own distinct sense of style.

¹⁹ Van Deburg, A New Day in Babylon.

Van Deburg's other work, Black Camelot (1998), argues that the real and imagined personalities that dominated black entertainment throughout the 1960s and 70s became cultural heroes who helped form in-group identity and ego enhancement for African Americans. According to Van Deburg, the black cultural hero was anyone from an athlete (Jim Brown and Willie Mays), to a musician (James Brown and Marvin Gaye), to a film star (Ron O'Neal and Pam Grier) to a mythical folk hero (Dolemite and Shine) who existed only on screen or in urban folk tales. The black cultural hero had considerable impact on a national and multiracial constituency, fueling activism and sustaining an oppressed population during desperate times. During the mid-1970s, Blaxploitation superheroes like Dolemite, Youngblood Priest and John Shaft deified black males as all-powerful, wealthy and free. Although these representations were created in a film studio boardroom, they were important to a population seeking escapism and a source of pride.²⁰

Perhaps the most important work to date about soul music and its role in the lives of black Americans is Brian Ward's Just My Soul Responding. Using 1954 (Brown v. Board of Education) as his starting point, Ward traces the progression of rhythm and blues and its relationship to mass black consciousness. At first, the black music of the 1950s was gentle enough to bring in a large white audience, but as the 1960s came to a close, black music became more race-conscious and reflected the rise of the Black Power movement in both soul and funk. Ward contends that during the heyday of the Civil Rights Movement, soul was the soundtrack of an entire people fighting for one cause:

²⁰ William Van Deburg, Black Camelot: African-American Culture Heroes in Their Times, 1960-1980 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

freedom. However, as the “dream” began to die, soul music began to reflect the growing frustration among black males.²¹

Ward, along with Nelson George, takes a look at the fall of black music not only in content and quality, but also in its popularity and relevance to black culture.²² To Ward and George, the late 1960s marked the high point in rhythm and blues music as well as Black Power and both fell apart at the same time. Greil Marcus believes that black music “drifted into accommodation” and separated from politics when in 1972, the Black Panthers entered the mainstream through their involvement in electoral politics.²³ The hard edge of soul and funk, a by-product of political protest, was disintegrating and “glossy black pop” reigned supreme as it became separated from politics.²⁴ Music was no longer political, and the unifying messages of songs by Curtis Mayfield, Sam Cooke and James Brown gave way to the shallow, soulless and electronic beats of disco, which George believes killed soul and funk. Although some soul artists were still very popular, the music became merely a commodity, a money making tool for major record labels like Atlantic and Motown and the conglomerates that bought out once independent record companies, rather than a black cultural or political voice.

In the mid-seventies, at the outset of the switch from soul to disco, Michael Haralambos wrote a tremendously influential piece regarding the changes in black music in America. In Soul Music: The Birth of a Black Sound in America, Haralambos states that there has been a decline in the popularity of the blues, while the popularity of soul has increased steadily. From this, Haralambos assumes that there is a direct link between

²¹ Ward, Just My Soul Responding.

²² Nelson George, The Death of Rhythm and Blues (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

²³ Greil Marcus, Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock ‘n’ Roll Music (New York: Plume Books, 1975), 103.

²⁴ Ibid., 107.

black society, culture, and music. According to Haralambos, the audience determines what music suits their needs. Like Ward, Haralambos feels music changes along with people's opinions, making it a dependent variable: it reflects the opinions, feelings and experiences of black America, more so than it directs the masses to action.²⁵

The writings of Michael Haralambos indicate that the cultural significance of soul music was evident during the 1970s, shortly after the era of soul faded away. Much of what they argue coincides with William McClendon, a Black Studies scholar and contemporary of Haralambos and Ian Hoare. McClendon argues that black music is an "amalgam of black life," conveying everything from anger to sadness through artists that play a dynamic role in the process. They create the music, improvise over it, write the lyrics and inflect the words with meanings. Most importantly, however, is that artists are the role models that black culture looks up to. Soul artists realized that great freedom can be found in music and they let their art do the talking for them. During the Civil Rights movement, when an artist expressed his or her own sense of freedom, their music in turn spoke to the freedom-seeking black populace, enriching the lives of the listener and encouraging them to soldier on. McClendon, like those who would write about this subject twenty years later, argued for the significance of music as an active force in the black community, a conclusion that has not dissipated since the mid-70s and modern scholars have developed even further.²⁶

Like McClendon, Portia Maulsby sees soul music not as a reflection of black society, but rather a "vehicle for self-awareness, protest and social change," and a derivative of the Black Power Movement. She argues that prior to 1965, black

²⁵ Haralambos, Soul Music, 9.

²⁶ William H. McClendon, "Black Music: Sound and Feeling For Liberation," Black Scholar 7:4 (January-February 1976): 20-25.

performers were not involved in the Civil Rights Movement, preferring more benign topics for their songs, whereas soul performers addressed the social and economic problems in black communities more directly. Not only did soul performers discuss these topics, they issued calls for change and involvement in community improvement. Maultsby uses the life and career of James Brown as her example of a soul artist involved in community activism. Unlike Brian Ward and Nelson George, Maultsby does not discuss the “other side” to James Brown, the mean-spirited, greed driven black capitalist who abandoned his roots by supporting Richard Nixon in the 1972 presidential election. She feels that what Brown did for his community, both in his music and his role as leader, far outweigh his personal shortcomings.²⁷

Where McClendon and Maultsby leave off, Mark Anthony Neal picks up, carrying the idea of the influence of soul music and performers even further. In What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture, Neal argues that the major concepts and narratives expressed in soul music were derived from the wants and needs of the black community. Moreover, the music helped form resistance within a community, and helped African-Americans address major problems and issues by bringing them into mainstream culture. Growing up in an apartment in South Bronx during the Civil Rights era, Neal witnessed the effects of soul firsthand on his family, friends, and neighbors. He saw how it brought them together in nightclubs and each other’s homes, and how it helped the community deal with issues such as racism, violence, and poverty. Unlike the other authors, Neal provides an explicitly political context for the music, discussing the goings on in the Civil Rights and Black Power

²⁷ Maultsby, “Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture,” 51-60.

movements and using them to interpret the music's relevance. Neal incorporates his discussion of soul with the impact of jazz and blues on the black community, music which was previously held in high regard as far as communicating the wants and needs of the black community. Lastly, Neal does not dissect the personal lives of the artists, but rather chooses to discuss their works and the relevance to the black community.²⁸

In 2002, Neal published a follow up to What the Music Said, entitled Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic. Soul Babies discusses African-American culture in the "post-soul" world (late 1970s-2000), and focuses on the impact of post-soul artists, musicians and actors on black culture. Neal's examination of the Blaxploitation genre and its impact on black culture are especially interesting. Films often portrayed black female sexuality as insatiable and deviant, and only able to be quenched by a strong, powerful and authoritative black male. This assertion is similar to that of Michele Wallace, who also feels that the empowerment of the black male during the 70s came at the expense of women, who were reduced to nothing more than objects of desire.²⁹ Although Neal is discussing black film, Ward and Van Deburg believe the same problem also occurred in black music.

Despite the large body of work on the cultural, social and musical significance of soul, very little was written about funk music until 1996 when Rickey Vincent's Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One was published. Vincent argues that funk placated a mass of people disillusioned with their limited power and poor standing in the United States. Vincent notes that perhaps the most important aspect of funk is its

²⁸ Mark Anthony Neal, What The Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture (New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

²⁹ Mark Anthony Neal, Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic (New York and London: Routledge Press, 2002); Michele Wallace, Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (New York: Dial Press, 1978).

role as the “sound of unity,” containing an intimacy, intensity and meaning for common African Americans played by musicians who had much in common with the audience, whether they be from the same community or economic class. At the height of the Black Power Movement, when black pride and black resentment towards the white establishment were also at their peak, artists created angrier, heavier music that truly represented the feelings of the time. Vincent’s belief is that funk succeeded soul music as the popular representation of black America’s social, spiritual and political values. Funk stayed rooted in the community, increased black unity and maintained its ties through not only its sound, but also its lyrical message.

Along those same lines, a chapter in Alice Echols’ Shaky Ground: The Sixties and its Aftershocks, argues that music that seemed apolitical was in fact politically significant. Like Nelson George, Echols contends that the commodification of soul and black music eventually evolved into disco. Disco spoke to a much larger audience, and in turn empowered women, minorities and homosexuals, many of whom now found “political utility and message in upbeat songs.” Fans of disco did not want to be bothered with heavy political conversation or serious societal issues in their music; they did not want the overly didactic music of the 1960s, just something that made them happy. Echols provides further evidence to show that music does not have to be outwardly political in message or lyrics to be politically significant.³⁰ Some Indianapolis recordings support this theory, as their political messages often derive from their production and consumption rather than their lyrics.

³⁰ Alice Echols, Shaky Ground: The Sixties and its Aftershocks (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 159-192.

Cultural Studies

Cultural studies theorists such as John Storey, George Lipsitz and Simon Frith believe cultural texts such as music do not reflect history, but rather make it, and need to be examined for the work they do, not merely what they reflect.³¹ Popular music, Lipsitz argues, is the “product of ongoing historical conversation in which no one has the first or last word.”³² The majority of cultural theorists agree that the consumption of texts such as popular music is an active process that creates cultural identity and textual meaning. Consumers strive to find meaning in these texts, hoping to find a way to connect them to their own lives, experiences, needs, and desires. Consumption, not production, according to Iain Chambers, is the key to understanding the usage of music. Chambers believes that although production of popular music is ruled by the commercial power of record companies and radio stations, “it is finally those who buy the records, dance to the rhythms and live to the beat who demonstrate, despite the determined conditions of its production, the wider potential of pop.”³³ This wider potential is the potential for popular music to play a fundamental role in forming a unique community identity. According to David Riesman, consumption in its simplest form is an act of community creation. Music provides a sense of community because the act of consumption establishes a connection

³¹ John Storey, Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); George Lipsitz, Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Simon Frith, Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock ‘n’ Roll (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Simon Frith, Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

³² Lipsitz, Time Passages, 99.

³³ Iain Chambers, Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture (London: Macmillan, 1985), xii.

with others.³⁴ Van Deburg's theory of "cultural glue" is very similar to the ideas of the cultural studies theorists, and provides a common ground where these two forms of scholarship agree.

Music and Community

Although no scholar has researched or written about Indianapolis' music scene during the 1960s and 70s, there are some who approach similar issues through the study of music and community. Amy Wilson wrote extensively about Indianapolis' jazz scene during the years 1933 to 1950. Her thesis, "The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue," explains the roots of Indianapolis' music scene and argues that race played a significant role in the development of Indiana Avenue as one of the hot spots for jazz in the Midwest. Wilson believes that Indiana Avenue's jazz scene developed against a backdrop of racial prejudice, which kept the black entertainment district in an isolated area and denied it any benefits for the cultural contributions black musicians and club owners made in different areas.³⁵ In recent years, several music historians have undertaken in-depth studies on music and community. Rob Bowman's Soulsville, U.S.A., an account of the rise and fall of Memphis' Stax Records, focuses on the music and the racial dynamics within the studio itself. Although not totally without incident, Stax' mix of black and white musicians usually worked harmoniously until the death of Martin Luther King. After that, black musicians began to distrust the white owners of the company, and black gangs that frequented the studio and the surrounding area occasionally threatened the white

³⁴ David Riesman, "Listening to Popular Music," American Quarterly 2 (Winter 1950): 10.

³⁵ Amy Wilson, "The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue: A Cultural History of Indianapolis' African-American Jazz Scene, 1933-1950" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1997), 9-10.

musicians. Whereas the music once brought everyone together, changes in attitudes eventually tore the company apart.³⁶ Both of these works, along with Governar and Brakefield's work on the Dallas, Texas music scene of the 1920s, indicate the pride communities take in the music made in their cities. Not only did residents go to the clubs and listen to live performances, but they also bought their records and requested them on the radio, both at home and when they moved or traveled to other locales.³⁷

George Sanchez's Becoming Mexican American and James Gregory's American Exodus also examine the relationship between indigenous music and the formation of an ethnic community. In Becoming Mexican American, Sanchez argues that the Mexican folk tradition of the *corrido*, an "integral part of Mexican life," made its way into Mexico's urban centers and was transformed from an expression of a rural folk tale of heroism into a popular song. Singers used the *corrido* to "interpret, celebrate, and ultimately dignify events... familiar to the *corrido* audience."³⁸ Like Van Deburg, Sanchez sees this form of music as cultural glue that brought together the immigrant population in the new and foreign world of 1920s Los Angeles.

As Sanchez sees the *corrido* as the authentic voice of the Mexican immigrant, Gregory believes that country music became a part of Okie migrants' way of thinking and melded people together within an Okie subculture in California during the 1930s and '40s.³⁹ Seeking group legitimacy, the Okies drew upon country music because it seemed

³⁶ Rob Bowman, Soulsville, U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997).

³⁷ Alan B. Governar and Jay F. Brakefield, Deep Ellum and Central Track: Where the Black and White Worlds of Dallas Converged (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1998).

³⁸ George J. Sanchez, Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 177-178.

³⁹ James N. Gregory, American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 223.

to provide the resources for a sense of independence and pride. Calling it the “most didactic form of twentieth century popular music,” Gregory argues that country music not only espoused meanings relevant to the migrant’s sense of self and group, but also reinforced the Okies’ commitment to rural life, and what Gregory calls “plain-folk Americanism.”⁴⁰ Some scholars believe the production of popular music is where the meaning is created while others contend that the consumption of music by the buying public produces the unified significance. Nevertheless, all scholars argue that music is culturally important to communities, whether it be the significance of the *corrido* to Los Angeles’ Mexican-American population or soul and funk music to the urban black community.

Ethnomusicologists

Another perspective on music and identity comes from ethnomusicologists, who are as interested in the people making the music as they are in the music itself. They consider the entire process of music making and the context in which it is made, and draw as much from the humanities as they do from musicology. “Ethnomusicologists,” according to one source, “seek to understand the human processes in which music is imagined, discussed and made, and to relate specific musical sounds, behaviors and ideas to their broader social, cultural and political contexts.”⁴¹ The regional roots of music, namely where the artists come from, their traditions, and the uniqueness of their sound are also important. Whereas cultural studies tends to focus more on the consumption of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 233.

⁴¹ British Forum for Musicology, “What Is Ethnomusicology: A Potted Definition,” British Forum for Musicology, 12 November 2001. <http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/I-M/staff/js/EthLink.html>

popular music, ethnomusicologists are more concerned with music production, the motivation to record certain music, and how the different sounds are made.

Although cultural theorists contend that the public consumption of music determines the true meaning of a text, an examination of how the text itself was produced and the motivations behind writing it is helpful for several reasons. If a white musician or songwriter penned “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud)” instead of James Brown, the positive reaction to the song by African Americans would not have been as great. Historically, the black listening public has held songs written, produced and performed by African Americans for African Americans in a much higher regard than those written or produced by whites, no matter what kind of music it is. Despite the mass appeal of Atlanta’s Commodores and Chicago’s Earth, Wind and Fire during the 1970s, the fact that each group came from the inner city and wrote and produced their own songs was a great source of pride within the black community.⁴²

Indianapolis

The vast majority of scholarly works on the significance of soul and funk examine the music on a national level and rarely look at individual communities, their problems and how music related to them. Although there were very few politically oriented songs produced in Indianapolis, many songs reflected common values and beliefs of the black community. Songs like “Drugs Ain’t Cool” and “The Kick,” indicate that the Rhythm Machine, a band rooted in Indianapolis’ black community, saw a significant drug problem in the city and felt the need to comment on it. However, as ethnomusicologists and William McClendon argue, it is impossible to separate the text from the performer;

⁴² See Vincent, Funk: The Music, the People and the Power of the One, 167-201.

the performer was the prophet who carried the message to the masses, and the message always meant something more when the audience knew they were feeling and experiencing the same things. He/she gave it relevance, gave it soul and made it real for the audience, who took it all in, processed it, and applied it to their own lives and well-being. So an ethnomusicological approach, combined with history and cultural theory, all help illuminate the study of soul music in Indianapolis.

Not only does this study find a niche among more general, national works on the significance of soul music to African Americans, it also fills an important gap in the history of Indianapolis' African Americans. Despite the large African-American population in Indianapolis and the growing interest in local and community history among historians and scholars, little scholarship exists chronicling the 1960s and 70s in Indianapolis' black community. The majority of scholarship focuses on Indiana Avenue during the jazz age, considered by most to be the glory years of African-American life in Indianapolis. Emma Lou Thornbrough's Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century is one of the exceptions to this lack of scholarship. She contends that Indianapolis' black community took a moderate political stance during the 1960s, noting that although developments in civil rights in Indiana reflected national trends, there was little violence as compared to other large metropolitan areas. Thornbrough also observes that although the Black Muslims and Black Panthers were present in Indianapolis, their radical politics never caught on because of the black community's penchant for peaceful protest and moderate politics.⁴³ Several other works also discuss this turbulent era in Indianapolis'

⁴³ Emma Lou Thornbrough, Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000). Blacks in Indianapolis participated in sit-ins and other protests, choosing to follow Dr. Martin Luther King's idea of peaceful protest. Thornbrough also notes that even the National Association for the Advancement of Color Persons

history, including Rachael Drenovsky's thesis on housing practices in Indianapolis and how many African Americans were kept out of certain neighborhoods until the 1960s when housing desegregation finally occurred in the city.⁴⁴ Richard B. Pierce's dissertation on African-American life from 1945 to 1970 indicates ardent political action within the black community, yet the politically moderate attitudes of the city's African-American population prevented widespread radicalism, while C. James Owen's work examines the impact of Unigov on Indianapolis and the local black community.⁴⁵ The 1960s and 70s were an important era in Indianapolis' black community. The Indiana Avenue business and entertainment district, once central to the black community, withered away during that period as businesses and nightclubs left the deteriorating neighborhood for newer buildings and nicer neighborhoods. Lockefield Gardens, formerly the gem of the city's African-American housing, closed in 1973 and displaced hundreds of residents. Although times were tough and nothing in life was certain, Indianapolis nightclubs were still packed every Friday and Saturday night for live soul and funk music, many times produced by local artists from within the community. It is this connection, between local musicians, their music and the Indianapolis African-American community, that is the focal point of this thesis.

By looking at Indianapolis soul music from a varied perspective, taking into account political, social, cultural and demographic changes, this study argues that

(NAACP) chapter in Indianapolis was once deemed too aggressive by many in the community, but by the late sixties had established itself as an important aspect of the city's black population.

⁴⁴ Rachael L. Drenovsky, "The Issue Now is Open Occupancy: The Struggle for Fair Housing in Indianapolis, 1890-1968" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University at Indianapolis, 2001).

⁴⁵ C. James Owen, *Governing Indianapolis: The Politics of Unigov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Richard B. Pierce, II. "Beneath the Surface: African American Community Life in Indianapolis, 1945-1970" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1996).

Indianapolis soul music functioned as cultural glue, and has the ability to bring African Americans together physically, emotionally and spiritually. Furthermore, it functioned in both an active and passive sense through consumption as well as production. The music was important to the community because soul oftentimes reflected the thoughts, desires and opinions of its intended audience. Despite the presence of the Black Panthers, the June 1969 uprising, and the great stresses the African-American community faced during the late sixties and early seventies, Indianapolis' African-American community was very moderate. Locally produced soul and funk music reflected this moderation, with only a handful songs containing overt messages of black pride and solidarity and none calling for violence or protest. Scholars such as Ward, Van Deburg, and others have proved this on a national level, but by looking at one city and one style of music, one can see how soul was not only a reflection of the black community during this time of stress, but also a response to events in the city.

Chapter Two discusses the state of Indianapolis' black community from 1968 to 1974 from a political and social perspective. After a brief review of the impact of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements (including the Black Panthers), I argue that local soul music was modest in message because of the moderation of Indianapolis' black community. Demographic changes due to the construction of IUPUI and I-65, housing desegregation, and changes in city government that affected the black community during these years create the context for soul music's performance in Indianapolis.

Chapter Three focuses on the soul and funk music produced in Indianapolis from 1968 to 1974. The musicians, disc jockeys, and record producers in Indianapolis were from the city's black community and understood the values and desires of their

neighbors. The music they created, produced, and played on the radio reflected and supported Indianapolis' black community with messages of black pride, black unity, and community awareness. Although they were out to make money, musicians were concerned about their community and sought to uplift it and increase community awareness through their songs. Through an examination of locally owned record labels such as Knaptown, Lulu, 3 Diamonds and Lamp, we can get a sense of how production and consumption influenced the messages of individual songs. Disc jockeys served an important role in the black community because they decided what was played on the radio and assumed an involved role in the community.

The fourth and final chapter focuses on the role of nightclubs and live music in the black community. In Indianapolis, soul and funk music served as “cultural glue,” as it brought people together physically, spiritually and emotionally in the city's many nightclubs, further reflecting and supporting the black community. Nightclubs frequently hosted fundraisers and charity events that hoped to improve the quality of life in the black community. Social clubs' dances and events that featured live music were regularly held at nightclubs as well. Despite the loss of Indiana Avenue as the traditional black entertainment district, nightclubs in other areas of the city featured soul and funk music on a nightly basis. Local bands catered to the audience by playing not only covers of popular songs by James Brown, Curtis Mayfield and others, but also their own original songs that garnered a great following in the city. The songs heard in the nightclubs reflected the moderation of Indianapolis' African-American population. Indianapolis' African-American population, although not fully accepting of the mantra of Black Power,

was quite comfortable with one by-product of Black Power and black machismo, the objectification of women.

The story of Indianapolis' African-American community and its relationship to locally produced soul and funk music is an important one that has yet to be told. Right now, record collectors and DJs in London, Los Angeles, and Chicago know more about the local Indianapolis music scene in the sixties and seventies than most residents of the city do. Locally produced records can be heard in clubs from coast to coast and found on soul and funk compilation CDs at your local music store, yet there is little known about the musicians, the music, or its context. While the majority of musicians and citizens who experienced the Jazz Age on Indiana Avenue are gone, there is another generation of musicians and club-goers that remember their own glory days on Indiana Avenue, at the 20 Grand Ballroom, and at the Soul City club. This paper is their story, the story of an African-American community that held together through difficult times and the music they listened to, danced to, partied to and cried to. This music is true music, not only a reflection of a community's values, morals and feelings, but a driving force behind the community and living document of Indianapolis' recent African-American history.

CHAPTER TWO: Talkin' 'Bout Revolution?: The Political and Cultural Moderation of Indianapolis' African-American Community

Indianapolis' African-American residents watched in dismay and horror in the mid-sixties when cities such as Newark, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and Watts burned and fellow blacks destroyed neighborhoods, residences and businesses. Indianapolis was fortunate, as there was no organized violence in the city until 1969. Indianapolis was different than other major metropolitan areas because the majority of the black population was not crammed into massive public housing projects or high-rise apartments. Although most blacks were confined to the Indiana Avenue corridor, Representative William Crawford believes it was the horizontal nature of the city that prevented widespread violence and strife. Crawford said,

Looking at Indianapolis, we're not a vertical city, we're a horizontal city. We're not stacked on top of each other. Everybody, rich or poor, had some green space that they could access. There was not that kind of tension that would arise out of places in more urban communities with a high population density and a high concentration of underprivileged people.

Furthermore, most African Americans came from strong, intact families where the father went to work everyday. Most had decent jobs and a strong work ethic, and if one needed a job, there was usually one available in the automotive industry, state government, or one of the many packing plants in the city. The unemployment rate in Indianapolis was the lowest it had been since the early 1950s, so there were few people out of work, hanging out on street corners and looking to make trouble.²

¹ Interview, author with Representative William Crawford, December 20, 2002.

² *Ibid.* Although Representative Crawford maintained that jobs were readily available for African Americans in Indianapolis, census statistics indicate that unemployment rates among Indianapolis blacks were substantially higher than what Crawford recalled. According to the 1970 census, taken just after Unigov was implemented, the black unemployment rate in

After 1968 tensions within the African-American community began to grow.

Disdain for the mayor's office, apprehension over interstate construction and downtown development, and a rise in poverty, violent crime, and drugs all took their toll on the local black community. Black angst came to a head in June 1969 with a riot in the Lockefield Gardens area at the north end of Indiana Avenue. Although small, the riot indicated growing dissent and anger in the black community. African Americans made several small gains in the community during the 1960s, including the removal of restrictive housing covenants allowing blacks to move into nicer neighborhoods. But housing desegregation, combined with interstate construction, downtown development, and rises in poverty, drugs, and violence nearly pulled the community apart at its seams. By 1968-69, the African-American community was spread throughout the entire city rather than in isolated areas, yet the community's identity held together.

To argue that Indianapolis soul music was modest in message because of the moderation of Indianapolis' black community, it is necessary to discuss the state of Indianapolis' black community from 1968 to 1974 from a political and social perspective. Despite perceived injustices on behalf of local government and construction projects that ripped apart the Indiana Avenue neighborhood, Indianapolis' African-American community remained remarkably calm.³ The Black Power Movement, including the

Indianapolis was 8.3%, while Indianapolis as a whole was around 3%. The white unemployment rate was also around 3%, and since blacks were still a minority in the city (12.7% of the population), their unemployment statistics had little bearing on the final total. For more, see: Table 53, "Employment Status by Race, Sex, and Urban and Rural Residence" and Table 92, "Employment Characteristics of the Negro Population for Areas and Places: 1970." 1970 Census of the Population, Volume 1: Characteristics of the Population (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, April 1973).

³ For more on the moderate political stance of Indianapolis' black community, please see Emma Lou Thornbrough, Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000).

Black Panthers and other militant groups, did not gain a strong foothold, and that is one reason why Indianapolis remained relatively tranquil. Indianapolis soul music was moderate in message because its black community was moderate in its political stance despite the tensions it faced.

Institutional Changes in Indianapolis' African-American Community

Throughout the twentieth century, Indianapolis' African-American community worked diligently for respect, equal rights, and an opportunity to be successful in a city where it had long been neglected and repressed. When African Americans first came to Indianapolis in the mid-nineteenth century, they were relegated to the swamps in the western part of the city, which is where the Indiana Avenue neighborhood eventually came to be. Prejudice was a dominant factor in the lives of many African Americans; blacks were discriminated against in nearly every facet of life, from renting and purchasing real estate to finding jobs. However, as the twentieth century progressed, life began to improve for African Americans. Jobs were plentiful and pay adequate in the many automobile factories and meat packing plants during the sixties. Gradual desegregation of housing and neighborhoods afforded blacks the opportunity to spread out in the city.⁴ Despite these signs of hope, things began to turn for the worse again in the late 1960s. With housing desegregation in place, new problems began to arise. A new city-county government called Unigov took away much of the political power blacks had achieved throughout the last few decades. State and federal construction projects split the traditional west side African-American community in two, displacing hundreds

⁴ Rachael L. Drenovsky, "The Issue Now is Open Occupancy: The Struggle for Fair Housing in Indianapolis, 1890-1968" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University at Indianapolis, 2001)

of residents and eventually forcing dozens of businesses to shut their doors. The late sixties and early seventies were times of great turmoil in Indianapolis, yet the city's African Americans maintained their moderate political, cultural, and social views as they dealt with the problems before them.

By 1968, African Americans in Marion County were becoming the base of the city's Democratic majority. Neighborhoods heavily populated by African Americans were known to swing entire elections towards the Democratic side. The population of African Americans in Indianapolis was ever-growing as well, as blacks made up 27 percent of the voter base, up from 21 percent in 1960 and 15 percent in 1950. The improving political influence of Indianapolis' African-American community took a tremendous blow in 1969, however, with the formation of the unified city-county government, or Unigov.⁵

After the 1968 elections, Republicans led by recently elected Mayor Richard Lugar controlled most of the political entities in Marion County and Indiana, including the Governor's Mansion, the Indianapolis City Council, the Marion County Council and both houses of General Assembly. In fact, Lugar was only the third Republican mayor in Indianapolis since 1925. With this stronghold in place, Mayor Lugar set about his plan to consolidate the legislative and executive bodies of the city of Indianapolis and Marion County, creating a single strong council and single county-wide executive.⁶

⁵ William A. Blomquist, "Unigov and Political Participation" in David Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows, editors, Encyclopedia of Indianapolis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1356. By the late sixties, African-Americans made up 57 percent of Marion County's Democratic voters.

⁶ William A. Blomquist, "Creation of Unigov (1967-1971)" in Bodenhamer and Barrows, Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, 1351. Fire and police departments and local school districts were not consolidated. Also, the towns of Beech Grove, Southport, Speedway and Lawrence were not absorbed by Unigov.

Despite promises of equity and fairness, Unigov was met with staunch resistance from both Marion County Democrats and Indianapolis' black population. Democrats called the proposal "Unigrab" based on the substantial advantage gained by Republicans in shifting power to the substantially white outlying areas of Marion County. The addition of 250,000 additional white constituents to the Indianapolis voting registers was of great concern to the African-American community. Few blacks lived in outlying areas. In fact 87 percent of Marion County's African-American population lived in Center Township. In 1969, 27 percent of the voting base within Indianapolis was black; by 1970, after Unigov came into effect, blacks made up only 18 percent of the voting public within Marion County.⁷ Although Lugar still contends today that diluting minority voter strength was not a goal of Unigov, prominent black citizens and activists such as Willard Ransom, Sr. disagree. Ransom, head of the local NAACP in the 1960s, felt Unigov was the death knell for Indiana Avenue and markedly changed Indianapolis' black community. In an interview he recalled that "Lugar brought the worst curse on all of us – Unigov. We fought him on that but he got it through. That brought the outlying areas of the city to vote. [Unigov] was the big thing that Lugar did that was bad for blacks."⁸ Black political clout and blacks' growing majority within the Democratic party, which until Lugar's election controlled the city of Indianapolis, was gone by 1970.

After Unigov, blacks were a minority people represented by a minority Democratic party that did not return to power in Indianapolis until the 1980s. This disfranchisement in the city led to growing malaise within the community. Many of Unigov's actions left thousands of African Americans wondering if their leaders cared for

⁷ *Ibid*, 1351.

⁸ As quoted in Fred Ramos and Steve Hammer, "The Death of a Black Neighborhood: It's A Lot Different Now Along Indiana Avenue," *NUVO Newsweekly*, July 20-27, 1994.

their needs. In 1969, as Mayor Lugar held town meetings on the Unigov issue, black residents became livid about what they saw as his uncaring attitude towards the African-American community. To some, he seemed more intent on solidifying his power base than being able to relate to and assist the black community.⁹ In April, hundreds stormed out of a town meeting after the mayor refused to comment on how Unigov might disfranchise the majority of the black community. Richard Bridgewater of the Black Coalition accosted Lugar on the Unigov issue, claiming he cared more for his pet project than for the thousands of blacks living in squalor. He identified a variety of issues on which Lugar's administration fell short. In an interview with the Recorder, Bridgewater noted, "The city has chosen to build highways without creating or locating adequate housing for displaced people. Slumlords, where are you now? The city and state have rejected the need for quality education for anyone as evidenced by this past legislature. The police continue to be reactionary and racist as demonstrated by the Shortridge [High School] incident."¹⁰ The Shortridge incident, which occurred in March 1969, resulted in the arrests of several prominent black activists, including Ben Bell and the Reverend Luther Hicks, who were peacefully protesting the three-day suspensions given to a group of black students for disrupting a school concert. The police came in and used "undue force" to arrest protesters. An onlooker called the episode "the most brutal thing I've ever witnessed in my life."¹¹ This incident was an example of the Indianapolis Police Department (IPD) and local government overreacting to a situation involving black protest, and it added more fuel to the fire of discontent growing throughout the black community. The discontent stemmed from the realization that their limited political

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Recorder, "Blacks Storm Out of Meeting Addressed by Mayor Lugar," April 5, 1969.

¹¹ Recorder, "Witnesses Say Teens Dragged On Steps," March 1, 1969.

power was dwindling, and they could not address issues like community loss, education, and other issues that mattered to blacks.

Not only did African Americans see the lessening of their political power during the late 1960s, but they also witnessed the deterioration of their historic Indiana Avenue community. One reason for the great change in the Indiana Avenue neighborhood was the desegregation of Indianapolis neighborhoods. When Indianapolis was settled in the nineteenth century, the Indiana Avenue area was a mosquito-infested swamp deemed unsuitable for mass settlement. However, with restrictive housing covenants and overt racism keeping blacks from inhabiting white neighborhoods, blacks were left with few options and eventually took up residence in the Indiana Avenue area. The blacks who did live outside the area commonly paid up to 21 percent more than white residents for a comparable property.¹² Until the early 1960s, de facto segregation was prevalent throughout the city. This concentrated black residences and businesses in one area, making Indiana Avenue the economic, social and cultural focus of the black community. Black-owned grocery stores, drug stores, clothing stores, and of course nightclubs, ran the entire length of Indiana Avenue. Crispus Attucks High School graduate and NBA legend Oscar Robertson believes that the Avenue was created by the white community in order to contain local blacks. He said, “Indiana Avenue was the center of everything for black people. It seems that the white power structure said, ‘OK, if you’re going to do it, do it right here so we can watch you.’”¹³

¹² Emma Lou Thornbrough, Since Emancipation: A Short History of Indiana Negroes, 1861-1963 (Indianapolis: Indiana Division, American Negro Emancipation Centennial Authority, 1963), 28.

¹³ As quoted in Ramos and Hammer, “The Death of a Black Neighborhood: It’s A Lot Different Now Along Indiana Avenue,” NUVO Newsweekly, July 20-27, 1994.

Although the segregation present in Indianapolis during the 1950s and 60s was never an official policy, it was omnipresent in the lives of most African-Americans. The majority of African-American citizens lived either in the Indiana Avenue area or near Martindale Avenue on the east side of Indianapolis. Several restaurants, including the Evans Restaurant on College Avenue, refused to serve blacks as late as the 1950s, while the Riverside Amusement Park allowed black customers only one day a year.¹⁴ The restrictive housing covenants that kept blacks out of most neighborhoods began to collapse, however, in the 1950s. By this time, many African-Americans had well-paying jobs and were able to buy houses outside of the Indiana Avenue area. The area between 30th and 38th Streets, from Meridian Street on the east to Northwestern Avenue, became the new area for black houses, small businesses, and nightclubs.

Another factor in the deterioration of Indiana Avenue was the construction of the inner loop of Interstate 65. During the mid-1960s, there was more interstate construction in Marion County than any other county in the United States.¹⁵ This construction greatly altered the racial geography of Indianapolis. Despite community efforts and the involvement of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) on behalf of the local Homes Before Highway Commission, the highway split the Westside black community in two. Indiana State Representative William Crawford, a former resident of Lockefield Gardens, believed this was the biggest generator of change within the black community. In a 1994 interview, Crawford said, “The strain occurred when they ran the inner-loop of I-65 right through the heart of the African-American community and that disrupted and displaced a

¹⁴ Interview, author with Representative William Crawford, December 20, 2002.

¹⁵ Interview, Philip V. Scarpino and Sheila Goodenough with Charles Hardy, Head of the Real Estate Office of Indiana University at Indianapolis from 1962 to 1971, October 27, 1989, bound transcription, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, IUPUI.

lot of people. That was the catalyst of the deterioration process.”¹⁶ Not only were people displaced, but also the city of Indianapolis offered them little help. Despite an influx of federal money, and the construction of new housing, it remains unclear whether or not the city used any money to house those repositioned from the Indiana Avenue neighborhood.¹⁷

The construction of the Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis campus also caused great consternation along Indiana Avenue. Beginning in 1962, the university gradually began acquiring property in the area, and although no one was forced out, the residential community began to erode. By 1971, IUPUI had purchased 751 parcels of land, mainly single-family houses, but also taverns, liquor stores and several churches.¹⁸ Those in the black community appeared bitter about the land takeover, accusing the city of allowing IUPUI to expand and modernize while doing nothing to

¹⁶ As quoted in Ramos and Hammer, “The Death of a Black Neighborhood,” NUVO Newsweekly, July 20-27, 1994.

¹⁷ Kenneth L. Kusmer believes that the effect of structural forces, namely transportation, housing, and communication systems, is one of three interrelated factors that affect the African-American urban experience. In the case of the Indiana Avenue neighborhood, the construction of the I-65 transportation system tore apart the community and forced thousands to move elsewhere in the city. Although Kusmer argues that these structural forces are inherently non-racial, the situation in Indianapolis showed otherwise. The interstate passed directly through an entirely black neighborhood, one that had been there for nearly one hundred years and had created its own cultural and social values. The city could have explored other options, but chose to destroy the black neighborhood as housing had grossly deteriorated over the years. This, Kusmer states, is another factor that affects the urban experience: how the African-American community responds to their living circumstances. Indianapolis blacks had no other choice but to develop their own set of values and beliefs since white Indianapolis essentially shunned the black community, restricting them to residing in this former mosquito-infested swamp on Indianapolis’ west side. Along those same lines, Kusmer’s other factor affecting the African-American urban experience were external forces, in the case of Indianapolis, de facto segregation and restrictive housing covenants that kept blacks out of many residential areas. For more, please see: Kenneth L. Kusmer, “The Black Urban Experience in America,” in Darlene Clark Hine, ed., State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 91-122.

¹⁸ Interview, Philip V. Scarpino and Sheila Goodenough with Charles Hardy, Head of the Real Estate Office of Indiana University at Indianapolis from 1962 to 1971, January 3, 1990, bound transcription, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, IUPUI.

improve life for the residents of the area.¹⁹ Many feared that some of their local landmarks, namely Lockefield Gardens and the 11th Street YMCA, faced elimination, while others came to the realization that they would have to leave their homes. “They [were] not going to put 30 to 40 thousand people in the Indiana Purdue and hospital complex and leave [that] many Negroes in the vicinity,” one resident concluded.²⁰ By 1970, 75 percent of Indiana Avenue inhabitants were tenants, many times transients with little interest in community preservation. Owners of these houses rarely lived on the Avenue anymore, so when word got around that IUPUI was starting to purchase homes along the Avenue, landlords flocked to the IUPUI Real Estate Office looking for the best deal. High renter turnover, low rate of return on rent, and lack of social supports prompted landlords to sell out. IUPUI then took over the properties, essentially becoming the landlord for thousands of people. Although IUPUI claimed their relocation was done in a humane way, the school was placed in an “exposed position” to take the blame for the problems caused by the displacement. According to former university administrator Charles Hardy, IUPUI forced no one from their residence until they found alternative housing, oftentimes with help from the university.²¹

Socioeconomic factors of the time, along with the infringement of IUPUI, I-65, and housing desegregation, prompted many residents to leave Indiana Avenue, decreasing the population drastically. From 1960 to 1970, each Indiana Avenue census tract lost over 2,000 residents, although the percentage of black residents in the area remained consistent since whites also left. (See Table 1.) A lack of quality housing was

¹⁹ As quoted by John I. Lands, executive director of the Fall Creek YMCA and founder of Our Market, in the Indianapolis Star, December 2, 1979.

²⁰ Recorder, “The Avenoo” column by The Saint, June 27, 1970.

²¹ Interview, Scarpino and Goodenough with Charles Hardy, 1990.

also an issue, as properties around the Indiana Avenue neighborhood became decrepit and many were condemned, vacated, and eventually destroyed. Although IUPUI helped many families relocate, there were others who could not afford to do so. Aside from Lockefield Gardens, there was little or no public housing, and nearly one-third of families were living in poverty.²²

Table 1

Racial Breakdown and Population Change in Indiana Avenue Census Tracts, 1960 & 1970

1960			
TRACT	3534	3535	3540
TOTAL #	3,185	7,473	3,849
WHITE	362	77	111
BLACK	2,823	7,388	3,737
% BLACK	88.6	98.9	97.1
1970			
TOTAL #	965	5,087	1,175
WHITE	282	16	22
BLACK	649	5,066	1,151
% BLACK	67.3	99.6	98.0

Source: Table P-1, "General Characteristics of the Population," and Table P-5 "General Characteristics of the Negro Population," Census Tracts: Indianapolis, Indiana Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, April 1962 and 1972). Please refer to Appendix A, Map 4 for census tract locations.

A clear change became evident in the location of Indianapolis' black population between 1960 and 1970. A close examination of U.S. census data reveals the migration of black population away from Indiana Avenue and towards 30th Street. Although this neighborhood never reached the pinnacle of community pride that Indiana Avenue had in the 1930s, it became another large black settlement in Indianapolis.

²² The mean incomes for the 1970 census tracts adjacent to Indiana Avenue were as follows: Tract 3534 - \$2,152, Tract 3535 - \$1,658, Tract 3540 - \$1,857. "Income Characteristics of the General Population," Census Tracts: Indianapolis, Indiana Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, April 1972).

Although the percentage of black residents in the Indiana Avenue area remained steady, the 1970 census shows a drastic increase in the number of African Americans living in areas north of 30th Street formerly inhabited by a predominantly white population. (See Table 2.) Despite a massive influx of African Americans into these areas, population numbers remained steady or dropped because most whites moved out as blacks moved in. Thus in some tracts, the percentage of black residents increased dramatically.

Table 2
Racial Breakdown and Population Change in New Entertainment District Census Tracts, 1960 & 1970

1960													
TRACT	3501	3505	3508	3509	3510	3511	3512	3513	3514	3515	3516	3517	3518
TOTAL #	3,012	3,907	3,305	3,465	6,284	6,250	5,933	2,261	3,609	3,097	8,059	9,670	3,498
WHITE	381	3,374	1,352	3,439	3,274	388	273	1	68	2103	4,833	4,209	3
BLACK	2,625	521	1,949	18	3,006	5,858	5,651	2,259	3,538	976	3,190	5,449	3,494
% BLACK	87.2	13.3	59.0	0.5	47.8	93.7	95.2	99.9	98.0	31.5	39.6	56.3	99.9
1970													
TOTAL #	2,543	4,305	4,383	4,724	5,798	4,538	5,009	1,570	2,237	2,427	5,632	7,674	2,058
WHITE	63	440	193	345	1,008	107	70	3	10	418	1,037	358	2
BLACK	2,471	3,831	4,173	4,372	4,777	4,425	4,932	1,566	2,220	2,000	4,582	7,308	2,054
% BLACK	97.2	89.0	95.2	92.5	82.4	97.5	98.5	99.7	99.2	82.4	81.4	95.2	99.8
Chg. In % Black Pop.	+10.0	+75.7	+36.2	+92.0	+34.6	+3.8	+3.3	-0.2	+1.2	+50.9	+41.8	+38.9	-0.1

Source: Table P-1, "General Characteristics of the Population," and Table P-5, "General Characteristics of the Negro Population," Census Tracts: Indianapolis, Indiana Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, April 1962 and 1972). Please refer to Appendix A, Map 4 for census tract locations.

In the area bound by 30th, 38th, and Meridian Streets, and Northwestern Avenue, whites went from being a clear majority to being almost non-existent by 1970. This "white flight" was caused by the encroachment of a rapidly increasing and recently relocated black population. This change, along with the construction of I-65 and IUPUI, dissolved

the old Indiana Avenue community and introduced new social and economic tensions. These political, economic, and social tensions frustrated the black community, yet they formed a moderate response to these problems with hopes to improve their situation.

The Black Response

Although the African-American community maintained a moderate political stance throughout the sixties, the institutional changes brought about by Unigov finally began to wear on many blacks in Indianapolis. The historical Indiana Avenue community had begun to disperse, leading to the deterioration of the business and entertainment districts for which the area was once known for. The community was in a constant state of flux because of these changes, yet it was subject to even more stresses. As the sixties came to a close, the national push for militant action from Black Power advocates such Huey P. Newton, Stokely Carmichael, and others began to resonate with younger members of the local black community. The historically moderate Indianapolis community became concerned that this rise in militancy could adversely affect their well being. Drugs, crime, and police brutality also increased during this era, further increasing tensions in the black community. African-American business owners and the entire Indiana Avenue business district confronted great hardships as nearly all white patronage left the area because of the fear of violence. The area dealt with further economic depression as many business owners left the area altogether. When faced with the dispersal of their community and a series of other political, economic, and social tensions, blacks in Indianapolis acted out their frustrations but ultimately chose a moderate response to their problems.

Throughout the history of Indianapolis' African-American community, local newspapers provided insight into the opinions and feelings of the local residents. In fact, these newspapers continue to be the only substantial repository that documents Indianapolis' African-American political opinion and black culture during the 1960s and '70s. At the forefront was the Indianapolis Recorder, the city's leading black newspaper, which chronicled African-American achievements since its inception in 1895. Published every Saturday, the paper was the stump that black Indianapolis used to not only voice displeasure with the white establishment, but also to support and promote their city, their culture, and their community. The paper recognized shortcomings in black housing, employment and education because that was what their "readers knew about and understood and wanted to know about."²³ Local newspapers illustrated how the black community dealt with both institutional changes and political, social, and economic tensions, revealing the moderate stance of Indianapolis' black community..

With little representation within the Indianapolis city-county government, few chances to publicly express dismay with the policies of Unigov, and a nearly total lack of coverage by the major Indianapolis newspapers, the Star and the News, African Americans relied on predominantly black newspapers as forums for discussion. In addition to the Indianapolis Recorder, several smaller or underground newspapers were available to a younger, more militant black audience. The monthly Participant, created in 1967, and the bi-weekly Indianapolis Free Press, first published in 1969, were the most prevalent underground publications in Indianapolis. Both papers included news stories untouched by the mainstream Indianapolis papers and the Recorder. Although not as

²³ Wilma Gibbs, "Indianapolis Recorder," in Bodenhamer and Barrows, editors, Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, 805.

militant or radical as the nationally circulated Black Panther, many blacks considered these papers to be radical because they covered topics usually ignored by the mainstream press, and they gave voice to a radical minority whose opinions did not coincide with the majority of the black population.

Black Indianapolis' response to the Black Panthers and other militant organizations was at best limited. Despite two underground newspapers that spoke to the benefits of black power, there was little participation and interest among the black community. Because of this limited interest, a mostly moderate incarnation of Black Power developed in the city that seemed more intent on community improvement than revolution. Both the Participant and the Free Press publicized the few Black Panther rallies held in Indianapolis, as well as the group's community activities. However, the arrival of the Black Panthers, and their activities in Indianapolis, received very little attention in the Recorder.²⁴ The lack of interest in the arrival of the Black Panthers, who had made national headlines for their outspoken militant beliefs, again showed the indifference of middle-class blacks towards radical politics. The group held weekly classes at the Eldridge Cleaver Information Center on East 23rd Street on how to deal with the "government, puppets of the power structures and the 'pig' police."²⁵ The Panthers saw themselves more as a community resource than a militant political group because, as Richard Pierce pointed out, Indianapolis' African-American community would not have sanctioned nor accepted acts of violence or radicalism. The Indianapolis

²⁴ Recorder, "Black Panthers Form Chapter In Our City," November 2, 1968.

²⁵ Indianapolis Free Press, "Panthers Teach People," June 26, 1970.

Black Panthers were much less politically active than other chapters, choosing to focus more on community involvement through their children's breakfast program.²⁶

Although not as rampant as in other major cities, police brutality was a concern for blacks in Indianapolis. The Recorder, the Participant and the Free Press documented uprisings in response to such brutality in Fort Wayne and Louisville, as well as the "St. Valentine's Day massacre" at the Pendleton Reformatory (a prison), which injured several black inmates.²⁷ These articles alerted the Indianapolis community to police violence elsewhere in the region and covered how other black communities dealt with problems similar to what they were facing in Indianapolis. During the 1960s, violent crime and drug abuse rose dramatically in the Indiana Avenue area and throughout Indianapolis as a whole, putting a great strain on the police department. Perhaps fearing a large-scale riot as seen in other major metropolitan areas, the Indianapolis Police Department took action to subdue the African-American population, according to Ben Bell, director of the College Room. He believed that the police department could only think of one way to "keep the niggers in their place," by using guns, mace, fists and police dogs.²⁸ The IPD also began to crack down on black entertainment, entering bars

²⁶ Richard B. Pierce, II, "Beneath the Surface: African-American Community Life in Indianapolis, 1945-1970" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1996), 63. Pierce also noted that the Indianapolis chapter did not publish one single article in the Black Panther News, the group's monthly newsletter and propaganda tool, further indicating the moderation of the Indianapolis chapter. The tone of the Black Panther News was very revolutionary and commonly promoted violence to achieve their goals, something that did not fit in with the activities or beliefs of the Indianapolis chapter.

²⁷ The Participant, "St. Valentine's Day at Pendleton," September 26, 1969. The incident started as a peaceful protest by black inmates wanting more black guards and counselors, improved medical treatment, better food preparation, the right to wear an Afro and greater access to black literature. The author of the article notes that Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler was available, while Eldridge Cleaver's Soul on Ice was outlawed.

²⁸ Indianapolis Free Press, "Black Leader Raps: An Interview With Ben Bell," April 19, 1969.

and after hours clubs without a warrant. On June 8, 1969, a group of predominantly white officers entered The Place, located at 3339 Central Avenue, an after hours club that served no liquor and was a place for blacks to meet after a long night of dancing or clubbing to enjoy live music. Police entered the building without explanation, pushing some patrons out of the way and drawing guns on others who resisted. Officers held one band member and his wife at gunpoint, while threatening to arrest the club owner and shut the place down because officers considered it a dump and a public nuisance. Although the incident passed without injury, it made an impression with club owner James Schaffer, who wondered in a letter to the Recorder if the IPD really wanted to improve race relations. In his closing, Schaffer remarked “This place could end up like Watts, Detroit, or Newark. We blacks are not going to take it like we have in the past. The time is now for you to use some diplomacy, and my advice is to take heed.”²⁹ Clearly, the relationship between the African-American community and the white-run local government was straining and it was just a matter of time before an incident, like the June 1969 riot, took place.

A small group of predominantly younger blacks became involved with more radical political groups and actively protested malfeasance by the IPD. These groups identified deeper problems and sought more immediate solutions to them than older, more conservative African Americans. They were not out to overthrow or usurp the power of the local government, although that was of great concern to the mayor’s office and the IPD. The Black Radical Action Project, led by Charles “Snooky” Hendricks, was

²⁹ Recorder, “Police Brutality Charge Made by Showtime Prexy,” June 28, 1969. It is important that the incident in question took place on June 8, roughly twenty-four hours after the unrest and violence on Indiana Avenue.

the first black militant organization in Indianapolis and was very active in anti-war demonstrations and protests at the City-County Building. Indianapolis Free Press reporters sought out interviews with local radicals such as Ben Bell, whose organization, the College Room, aided the fight against a “racist Amerika,” and with Black Panther members Duck Campbell and Keith Parker.³⁰ These interviews illustrate that a small, radical, anti-white element was active in Indianapolis during 1969 and later years. Bell’s interview with the Free Press indicates the disdain that portions of the community felt towards the local government and police. These groups felt there was little being done to improve living conditions in the city, and they were greatly concerned about the lack of political power held by African Americans. Bell’s interview took place in April 1969, two months before the Indiana Avenue riot. He offered a chilling prediction of what was to come, remarking, “Indianapolis is like any other city in that as soon as the people realize the problems they’re faced with, you will have social disorder (or race riot) or whatever you want to call it. But as soon as people find out what is happening with city hall and city government the city will not be unblemished.”³¹

In June 1969, a riot broke out in the Indiana Avenue area. As more residents and businesses left Indiana Avenue and frustration over living conditions grew, tension increased on the Avenue. The riot began when two police officers were called to respond to a fight in the Lockefield Gardens complex, a traditionally working-class area that was seldom affected by crime or violence. As the officers restored peace, a local youth swiped one officer’s gun and headed towards an area where there were small children playing.

³⁰ Indianapolis Free Press, “Black Leader Raps,” April 19, 1969; Indianapolis Free Press, “All Power to the People: An Interview with Duck Campbell and Keith Carter,” May 6, 1970. Carter was the student body president at Indiana University-Bloomington.

³¹ Ibid.

Officers pursued the youth and fired several shots in the direction of the children, which drew the ire of many residents. As these residents grew angrier, they took to the streets and eventually turned to violence, smashing storefronts and setting several fires. The police and black community leaders subdued the crowd, but not before the riot damaged several local businesses.

Newspaper articles and eyewitness accounts identified the two white officers as intruders seeking to solve an incident among blacks that did not require their assistance. Making it worse, these officers chased a young man through a playground and fired three shots, threatening innocent children and the community itself. These actions served as the catalyst for unrest when combined with the many institutional changes occurring within the African-American community. The riot showed that despite the moderation of the black community, when pushed, Indianapolis' African-American population would fight back and defend their own. Blacks felt misrepresented, uncared for, mistreated by the mayor's office and local officials, and perhaps for good reason. The white-run city government brought about several changes that greatly altered the residences, political power and history of Indianapolis African-American community from 1968 to 1974.

Still, even militant blacks reacted to the riot with caution. Although these groups preached black unity and black pride, and they consistently railed against the local police and government, they were not outspoken proponents of violence or property damage. During the June 1969 riot along Indiana Avenue, Bell, John Lands of the Our Place market, and several Black Panthers played a major role in keeping rioters off the streets

and from destroying and looting businesses and residences along the Avenue.³² Former Black Panther Makau Gaiti recalled, “We were trying to calm the people down and tell them they were hurting their community, that people in the community weren’t the enemy.”³³ At the forefront of a growing malaise among the black community, these community action groups fought to protect the black community and improve the quality of life. They recognized the possibility of violence because they drew attention to the racism around them, but these groups did not condone violence towards fellow blacks, or the destruction of black-owned businesses. Clint Jones, a former activist, said “We all used to say ‘burn baby burn,’ but then we realized we were burning our own shit, so we stopped. It was just silly to think that this was a good way to protest.”³⁴

Although the Recorder and local underground papers carried extensive coverage of the June 1969 riot on the front pages of their respective publications, the Star and the News relegated riot coverage to the back page. The majority of coverage by the Star and the News concerned itself more with the actions of the Indianapolis Police Department, Mayor Lugar, and how they communicated with the governor’s office. Although local black leaders and several Black Panthers were acknowledged for their actions in restoring peace, the police and fire departments received greater acclaim for “getting the trouble

³² The Indianapolis Recorder, “Two Nights of Disorder Rack Westside; Calm Restored Saturday,” June 14, 1969. Aside from the June 1969 riot, there were very few instances of property damage or vandalism reported in the Recorder or any of the Indianapolis newspapers. The Big 10 Market, a staple at 849 Indiana Avenue for over twenty years, was firebombed in May 1969. The white owner of the store had always felt like part of the community on the Avenue until recently when he felt threatened by the “growing wave of black militancy” in Indianapolis. Recorder, “Big 10 Market Firebombed,” May 10, 1969.

³³ Pierce, “Beneath the Surface: African-American Community Life in Indianapolis, 1945-1970,” 63.

³⁴ Interview, author with Clint Jones, December 16, 2002.

area cordoned off.”³⁵ There were no statements from leaders within the black community or any reactions from Indiana Avenue residents, only comments from Mayor Lugar and several white police officers. With the rise of violence in other similarly sized cities, the article tried to alleviate the concerns of readers who were afraid that widespread panic and violence would come to the Circle City. Not once does the article deal with the effects of the riot on Indiana Avenue businesses, business owners, or residents, nor does it address how black citizens reacted to the event.³⁶

Although the Lockefield riot indicated the ability of the black community to react violently when threatened, the event also emphasized the deep-seated moderation of the community. First, the riot itself received very little press coverage in the Recorder. Published weekly, the Recorder only discussed the riot in one issue. To the editors, and most likely to many residents, the riot was a one-time event and they saw no need to discuss it further.³⁷ Second, the riot lasted only for several hours and was concentrated in the Indiana Avenue area. Riots in cities like Watts, Newark, and Detroit sometimes lasted for days on end, destroying millions of dollars in property and taking many lives. Along Indiana Avenue, rioters looted several businesses and attempted to start fires, but they were quickly extinguished. The riot did not spread throughout the city nor did it jeopardize businesses or residences in other black neighborhoods. According to Representative William Crawford, the Black Radical Action Project and other militants

³⁵ Indianapolis News, “Quiet Returns to Indiana Avenue,” June 6, 1969.

³⁶ See also Indianapolis Star, June 7, 1969; Indianapolis News, June 7, 1969; Indianapolis Star, June 8, 1969.

³⁷ For more, please see Recorder issues from June 11 and June 18, 1969.

attempted to spread the violence throughout the city, but cooler heads prevailed and the riot stayed centralized on the near west side.³⁸

Despite the actions of the militant Black Radical Action Project, many of Indianapolis' black radicals helped quell the riot rather than declare open revolt. Activists like Ben Bell, who had earlier warned the city that something like this might happen, hurried to the Avenue to restore peace. Although his radical politics set him apart from the majority of Indianapolis' blacks, he realized the importance of maintaining the community and not destroying it. Our Place organizer John Lands and several ministers also played a key role in helping bring the riot to a peaceful ending. In most cities, riots ended when white police officers entered the area and shot rubber bullets or tear-gassed the rioters. Indianapolis black leaders called for law and order themselves and sought a solution from within the community itself.

The brief coverage of the Indiana Avenue riot in the Recorder further signified the moderation of the newspaper's audience. Middle class blacks were the core audience of the paper, and for the most part, this group was embarrassed by and wanted to forget the riot. The Recorder appealed to the majority of Indianapolis' black residents by finding a political middle ground. With the exception of letters to the editor and Andrew W. Ramsey's "Voice From the Gallery" column, there was rarely a harsh indictment of the city government or an in-depth study of the African-American quality of life in Indianapolis.³⁹ The paper treated the arrival of the Black Panthers with as much notice as wedding or cotillion announcements. Much like the city's locally produced soul and funk

³⁸ Interview, author with Representative William Crawford, December 20, 2002.

³⁹ Recorder, "A Voice from the Gallery" column by Andrew W. Ramsey, June 14, 1969.

music, the Recorder serves as a reflection of the African-American population's political moderation.

The paper also treated Black Power and black pride as something alien, further indicating the cultural tensions that existed between young and old African Americans. Although advocates of Black Power wore Afros and dashikis and listened to soul, fashion and music did not necessarily indicate a growing trend in radicalism and militancy. Nevertheless, the growing popularity of soul music, dashikis, and the Afro hairstyle among young blacks greatly concerned the older generation, who believed that over-zealous or militant young blacks could undo all they had worked for since the 1950s, including housing desegregation and increased representation in the city government. The content of the Recorder reflected this attitude. The only materials directly appealing to a younger audience were small articles on the local music scene and an in-depth recap of high school and college sports. Letters to the editor covered many topics, but many were from concerned older citizens who did not understand or felt threatened by the younger set. They identified soul music, for instance, as a particular cause for concern. One reader wondered why Indianapolis needed a new FM radio station that featured soul music. WTLC-FM powered up for the first time in 1968, much to the delight of a listening audience that felt neglected by other popular music stations, yet some residents worried about the messages of black power contained in soul music. The concerned citizen, who was "disgusted at the programming" put on by the station, wrote "...if and when the station in question is censored or better still cancelled, there will be a very small minority of the 100,000 soul brothers he [the station manager] thinks are listening who

will even miss it.”⁴⁰ Although the station and its programming were welcomed by younger blacks, older middle-class blacks were not comfortable with it. Nor were they comfortable with other nods to Black Nationalism and the militancy it implied.

The latest fads in clothing and hairstyles concerned older blacks. They saw these new styles as key components of a militant reaction to national and political changes and feared the city’s young blacks were taking a radical turn. In 1968, the Recorder dedicated nearly an entire front page to discussing a new trend in African-American hair care: the Afro. The natural look was new to Indianapolis in 1968, at least to the older middle class set that the Recorder saw as its core audience. The paper felt the need to explain the Afro, what it meant to black culture, and what local residents thought about it. The article associated the hairdo with a definite rise in racial pride and debunking of the “white is right” theory that made natural, kinky black hair seem ugly and shameful. “Young people by the thousands,” the author noted, “have discarded what was at one time considered household necessities: hot combs, and curling irons, hair pomades, and hot towels.”⁴¹ Although mainstream ideas were changing and younger blacks had already embraced the hairdo, the paper still presented the concept of the Afro as foreign to its audience and even a political threat. In a later issue, a letter to the editor conveyed the concerns of a local resident over the popularity of the Afro. She wrote, “I am rather fed up with the Afro fad. I have no intention of feeling guilty about the way I wear my hair....I dress to please my husband who does not care for the Afro style, and I refuse to

⁴⁰ Recorder, “Reader Questions Need of Soul Radio Station, Negro Leaders” in “Our Readers Write” column, September 21, 1968.

⁴¹ Recorder, “Natural Look Reflects Racial Pride,” August 17, 1968.

break up my home over a hairdo.”⁴² This woman was most likely offended by the assertion that if one does not wear their hair naturally, then they are submitting to the white standard of beauty and are not part of a united black community.⁴³ By 1968 and 1969, the trend of hair straightening fell across the country. Even James Brown gave up his prized coiffure in favor of a tight Afro to show his black pride. Many communities celebrated this trend, yet in Indianapolis, older blacks stayed true to a traditional hairdo and seemed to view black pride with suspicion.

As the voice for Indianapolis’ African-American community, the Recorder staff oftentimes raised concerns about the status of life along the Avenue. In some instances, columnists became spokespeople for the community, or at least for its middle class majority. Readers trusted the opinions of these writers. When Indiana Avenue began to decline in the late sixties, *The Saint*, one black voice among the many, took it upon himself to alert his readers of the forthcoming peril. J. Saint Clair Gibson was critical not only of perceived shortfalls in city government but also the poor behavior of Indianapolis’ black population. *The Saint*’s “The Avenoo” began in the 1930s. He knew the history and importance of the Avenue and did not want to see it die. In the 1930s and ‘40s, the Avenue was the centerpiece of the community, giving Indianapolis a nationally known landmark to be proud of. However, as early as 1941, residents along Indiana Avenue feared their beloved “Funky Broadway” was nearing its end. In an open letter to their readership, Recorder editors proposed the question, “Is the Avenue Doomed?” in the January 4, 1941 edition. In reply, *The Saint* expressed concern over the many sordid acts

⁴² Recorder, “Natural Hair-dos Not For Disgusted Reader,” in “Our Readers Write” column, September 21, 1968.

⁴³ Hank Ballard, “How You Gonna Get Respect (If You Haven’t Cut Your Process Yet)?” (King Records KS6196, 1968).

observed during his time. “We have witnessed many good fights and shootin’ scrapes...we have peeped out of our windows and seen men disrobed to their underwear and have stood helpless while a drunk was having his pockets picked,” he wrote. “[We have] seen women fight over women, ditto for men; had a mind to call the police, but changed my mind...heard young boys and girls use all kind of profanity at all times.” In 1941 and again in 1970 when the Recorder reprinted the letter, The Saint expressed concern that non-residents came to the Avenue to raise hell and then returned to their homes in other sections of the city with no remorse. However, the most troubling aspect of the turmoil on the Avenue was that it was also caused by “members of our group,” Indianapolis’ black population. No matter what the police and city authorities did to shut down taverns and nightclubs, it was the violence and vice brought to the Avenue by its black patrons that most threatened its livelihood.⁴⁴

The reprinting of The Saint’s letter was fitting considering the dilapidated state of Indiana Avenue in 1970. Building condemnations, widespread poverty, increasing violence, and drug use racked the neighborhood, driving away potential consumers and visitors. By placing some of the blame for problems in the community on Indianapolis’ black population, The Saint raised a moderate, if not conservative opinion. If The Saint had placed blame solely on Unigov, IPD, or white residents of Indianapolis, it would have indicated a much more radical stance. In fact, The Saint encouraged reaching out to whites, not for a handout, but rather to make them feel comfortable enough to visit the area and put money into the local economy.

The Saint saw the rise of violence amongst blacks and the lack of patronage along the Avenue as a major cause for its demise. For example, after several white persons

⁴⁴ Recorder, “The Avenoo” column by the Saint, January 4, 1941, reprinted July 4, 1970.

were attacked during a basketball game at Crispus Attucks High School, the Saint was very critical of the incident and warned of the consequences. He wrote, “Believe it or not – Attucks will be BLACK-BALLED...and there is nothing you can do about it...but sit on the sidelines and weep real tears for the unholy behavior of your gallant black offspring. This thing will not only hurt ATTUCKS but all the black-owned taverns on this side of town and beyond.”⁴⁵ During the heyday of Indiana Avenue, it was not uncommon for white couples and college students to frequent the jazz clubs and cafes along the Avenue. However, with the increase in violence white attendance dropped dramatically because patrons were afraid to enter black neighborhoods. Violence towards whites also extended to those in the service industry, who began to avoid the Avenue because of the danger and refused to deliver goods to the area.⁴⁶ Unlike more radical blacks, The Saint understood white patronage as central to the strength of black businesses and the black community and he argued that its decline would only expedite the deterioration of the Avenue. Community preservation was more important to The Saint than Black Power.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Recorder, “The Avenoo” column by the Saint, January 11, 1970.

⁴⁶ Recorder, “The Avenoo” column by the Saint, July 25, 1970.

⁴⁷ For more, see: Harold Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From its Origins to the Present (New York: William Morrow, 1967). Cruse contended that there were two differing streams at work in the black community: assimilationist and separatist. The assimilationist stream was more politically militant and oftentimes aligned themselves with white groups, who instead of working with blacks, instead began to oversee and manipulate blacks. The separatist stream believed in the necessity of black oriented, black controlled economic and cultural institutions, yet submitted themselves to be governed by political parties. Cruse believed that these competing factions had to come together for the preservation of cultural and economic institutions. The Saint fell somewhere in between these groups, believing that blacks were plenty capable of governing themselves, but needed the help of white patronage along the Avenue to sustain to help rejuvenate and improve the economy and culture in the area. He felt this was necessary since many blacks did not patronize black-run businesses in their own neighborhoods anymore. Many members of the community seemed disinterested in preservation, and the community, its businesses, and culture suffered.

Although increased violence greatly affected the economy of the Avenue, residential dispersion also took its toll. Black families became spread out throughout the city and were no longer compelled to rely upon their own community for goods and services. The decline in black patronage extended to the retail market as well. Those who were unable to reach the larger retail outlets in the outlying areas of the city depended on Indiana Avenue to provide for them, as it had when they were young. The National Jacket Company, a manufacturer of outdoor work clothes, was one business affected by the population outflow. The business, a staple on the 200 block of Indiana Avenue for over seventy years, closed its doors in 1971. In her memoirs, Elizabeth Enix, daughter of the owner, reflected on the economic downfall of Indiana Avenue. She said, “My father closed his business in 1971. Unfortunately, the effects of desegregation chipped away at the profits of black businesses along Indiana Avenue.”⁴⁸ Blacks understood the problems created by desegregation, and despite their frustration, the majority did not turn to the radical political element. Instead, blacks blamed themselves for their problems and widely criticized those within the community who did not put money back in.

During 1970, The Saint lamented the loss of a black owned business on almost a weekly basis. Unlike some in the community, he realized that without support from within the black community, especially younger blacks, many African-American owned businesses would suffer. As it was, there was little white patronage and without community support, businesses would close. The closing of a filling station at 22nd Street and Central Avenue was especially troubling to the Saint. He could not understand how

⁴⁸ “Memoirs of Indiana Avenue,” Elizabeth Enix papers, M756, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society.

every street in the black community could be lined with cars and yet this filling station failed. According to him, blacks were only concerned about supporting black businesses that were illegally run. The Saint wrote, “Negroes just won’t support black enterprises unless it’s a ticket joint, bootleggin’ joint or gamblin’ joint.”⁴⁹ Most, if not all, retail stores along the Avenue closed down or were looted out of business by the early 1970s, forcing residents to look elsewhere for household items. Very few new businesses opened during the late sixties or early seventies because there was no customer base; if they did not live away from the Avenue, they certainly had begun shopping elsewhere. The many nightclubs along Indiana Avenue also faced a decrease in patronage. Local residents began to look elsewhere for live music and entertainment, taking their leisure dollars to new and exciting clubs in other areas of the city.

The Last Years of Indiana Avenue

The institutional, social, and political stresses that affected the Indiana Avenue community also took their toll on the local entertainment scene. In the 1930s, the Avenue boasted nearly twenty clubs where live music could be heard on a nightly basis.⁵⁰ However by 1966, that number had dwindled to five clubs, and by 1974 it had shrunk to four.⁵¹ With the end of de facto segregation in certain areas of Indianapolis during the early 1960s, black residents could choose from a greater variety of clubs outside of Indiana Avenue. This, coupled with the migration of the black population away from the

⁴⁹ Recorder, “The Avenoo” column by the Saint, August 15, 1970.

⁵⁰ Wilson, “The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue,” iv.

⁵¹ Polk Indianapolis (Marion County, Ind.) City Directory (Indianapolis: R.L. Polk and Company, 1960-1974). These particular city directories were found at the Indiana Historical Society, however, they are available at nearly every library within the city of Indianapolis in text or microfilm.

area, greatly affected nightclub attendance on the Avenue. Despite heavy advertising and press releases from Indiana Avenue clubs in the Recorder, club goers now preferred the 19th Hole, the Hub-Bub, and others north of 30th Street over the clubs on The Avenue such as the Blue Eagle and the Place to Play, that their parents frequented. As of 1971, it was uncommon to see an ad in the Recorder for an Indiana Avenue club. According to Charles Hardy, head of the Indiana University Real Estate Office, the Indiana Avenue area had become the “worst slum in town” by 1967.⁵² Poverty made living conditions horrendous and the overall appearance of the Avenue became unsightly. Most residents had little civic pride in their domicile or their neighborhood. Some club-goers patronized “ofay,” or white run businesses, altogether going outside the black community. The Saint wrote, “blacks are packin’ ofay joints around the town (and they aren’t advertising for your business – you are going voluntarily – like hogs to slaughter).”⁵³ The Saint believed that blacks should put money back into the community and support their own rather than white nightclub owners.

The rise of drugs scared off many would be patrons. Musician Jimmy Guilford linked the fall of the Avenue with the sudden increase in drug use at the beginning of the 1960s, noting that addicts would prey on white couples who came to the Avenue on the weekends for jazz or on those blacks, like Guilford, who were from outside the area and

⁵² Interview, Philip V. Scarpino and Sheila Goodenough with Charles Hardy, Head of the Real Estate Office of Indiana University at Indianapolis from 1962 to 1971, October 16, 1989, bound transcription, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, IUPUI.

⁵³ Recorder, “The Avenoo” column by The Saint, January 11, 1970. Twenty years earlier, The Saint admonished black social clubs for holding their Christmas gatherings in white-owned halls, asking “What is the need of Negroes investing their money in nice places if all of our top [social] clubs are going to take their \$1,000 functions to ofay spots?” Recorder, “The Avenoo” column by The Saint, January 14, 1950 as cited in Wilson, “The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue,” 128.

looked like they had some money.⁵⁴ Although the clubs offered shows nearly every night, weekends still drew the biggest audiences. However, according to Charles Hardy, a frequent visitor to many homes along the Avenue, the weekend was also the most dangerous time because some people were drinking heavily or using drugs, and fights and domestic quarrels occurred frequently.⁵⁵

Throughout all these tensions, Indianapolis' African-American population remained moderate. The impact of Black Power on the cultural history of the city is visible from its music and clothing to its movies and art, but local responses to black power, to the Lockefield riot in 1969, and to other tensions within the black community remained moderate. As a by-product of the changing face of Center Township and downtown Indianapolis, the downfall of Indiana Avenue had far reaching effects, not only for the neighborhood's residents, but also for musicians in Indianapolis. The nightclubs they grew used to playing in for years were now dilapidated and could no longer draw an adequate crowd, so they moved along with the population to nightclubs in different parts of the city. The club scene changed greatly, with music still at the forefront, but variety shows, special theme dances and contests added to draw in greater audiences. Indianapolis musicians tailored their sets to adhere to the desires and wants of their audience, and with the onset of the 1970s, music with an edge, both lyrically and musically, became the preferred sound. Audiences wanted music that reflected their concerns within the community and that made them feel better about themselves and their role within society. Bands no longer wore matching tuxedos or suits, as dashikis and

⁵⁴ Interview, author with Jimmy Guilford, March 22, 2002.

⁵⁵ Interview, Scarpino and Goodenough with Charles Hardy, October 16, 1989. This is one reason why the Saturday afternoon matinee (usually 4-7pm) became commonplace at nearly every club, since most patrons were more apt to come to the Avenue at four o'clock rather than at eleven.

other characteristically African-American clothing became popular. These changes illustrate the complex relationship between music and society, evident within Indianapolis throughout the latter part of the 60s and the early 70s. The dissolving African-American community, the underlying threat of unrest, and the tensions surrounding the construction of I-65 and IUPUI made the sounds of soul appealing to a black audience looking for comfort, hope and a way to forget their problems.

CHAPTER THREE: Soul Power!: African-American Music and Radio in Indianapolis

After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in April 1968, black popular music underwent a great change. It began with James Brown's "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)," the first song to overtly embrace and cherish black pride. Shortly thereafter, a glut of songs were released by artists such as Dyke and the Blazers, Bobby Byrd, Johnnie Taylor, Curtis Mayfield, Wilson Pickett, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, and others that seized upon the opportunity afforded by Brown. It was now acceptable to release songs specifically for a black audience because record companies no longer feared low sales numbers – after "Say It Loud," these songs dominated the black music charts. While there was a growing unrest in the black community agitated by the words of Huey Newton, Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and others, popular black music stayed the course, merging an emphasis on black pride with a moderate message. Other artists such as Gil Scott-Heron, the Last Poets, and the Black Panthers own band, The Lumpen, preferred harsh, militant, and shocking critiques of the government, the Vietnam War, and white America. Several jazz artists including Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago took similar stances. While these artists were popular in certain circles, the majority of black America preferred songs with an uplifting and moderate message. In Indianapolis, where militancy and radical politics were an underground phenomenon, moderate soul and funk recordings were the norm.

Although the Indianapolis music scene declined steadily throughout the fifties and sixties, it experienced a resurgence beginning in 1968. In addition to the older artists that remained in Indianapolis, many new and exciting bands and musicians also frequented

the club scene and gained a tremendous following. Bands such as the Moonlighters, the Highlighters, Billy Ball and the Upsetters, and the Diplomats played regularly at local clubs. The Presidents, transplants from Louisville, Kentucky, eventually made Indianapolis their home after they gained a tremendous following. For most bands, it was only natural that they would make their way into the recording studio because they knew their nightclub success could translate into record sales. Musicians took time off from their day jobs to write songs with the hopes of being played on the radio. Blacks bought these records upon release and also called WGEE-AM and WTLC-FM, Indianapolis' two radio stations that focused on predominantly black programming, to request their favorite songs.

During the late sixties and early seventies, there was growing unrest in the city; I-65 construction, the infringement of the IUPUI campus, and the small riot along Indiana Avenue worried residents. The Black Radical Action Project and the Black Panthers attempted to gain a foothold in Indianapolis at this time. Yet, Indianapolis soul and funk recordings maintained a moderate message that appealed to the majority of Indianapolis blacks. Songs about politics and radicalism were non-existent, while songs about love gained, love lost, and up-tempo dance numbers dominated the airwaves from 1968 to 1974. There were also a number of songs that dealt more explicitly with black pride, black unity, and community issues such as drug abuse. These songs not only made people dance, but they also expressed pride in their community, generated concern for making it a better place, and reflected the moderation of the black community. Locally produced soul and funk music and the musicians, deejays, and record producers behind it all sought to support and promote the black community. They hoped to uplift spirits and

increase community awareness through music and a positive message that crossed boundaries between radio, live music, and the black community at large.

Record Labels and the Creation of an Indianapolis Sound

Although Indianapolis record labels never reached the magnitude of Detroit's Motown label or Stax in Memphis, these small, privately owned companies helped give a voice to many Indianapolis musicians who would not have recorded without them. Cultural theorist Simon Frith argues that independent musicians and record companies create innovation, not major labels.¹ Although Indianapolis followed the national trends in soul and funk music, a unique Indianapolis sound developed that is evident in the majority of recordings. The Indianapolis sound not only reflected the moderation of the black community, but also the informal yet intense nature of local soul recordings. These musicians were independent in the truest sense, working straight jobs at Ford or General Motors and recording and playing music in their spare time. As James Bell said, "We were just everyday people making records."² For the most part, Indianapolis' record companies were also independent, owned by people who usually came into the business as a result of other ventures such as record sales or concert promotions.

Frith also believes that "records are made according to what the public is known to want already," or, that records are a reflection of a buying public's beliefs, values, and tastes in music. Public demand, in other words, is the organizing idea for the record industry.³ Music is not just entertainment, but a window into the community, especially in Indianapolis where the relationships between musicians, record producers, and

¹ Simon Frith, Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock n Roll (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 89.

² Interview, author with James Bell, musician, December 9, 2002.

³ Frith, Sound Effects, 89.

distributors illustrate the connection that Frith alludes to. Frith's theory holds true in Indianapolis, where locally produced soul and funk music is an essential tool in understanding the social, political, and cultural climate of the city. Although certain elements within Indianapolis' African-American population were politically radical, the majority was not, and it is their beliefs, values, and tastes that were reflected in locally produced soul and funk music from the late sixties and early seventies.

Prior to 1960, record companies such as Capitol and Dot maintained offices in Indianapolis near the Indiana Avenue entertainment district, along Capitol Avenue. These labels sought out the best talent that Indianapolis offered, from jazz artists to doo-wop singers. Beginning in the mid-1950s, doo-wop swept the nation and the youth of Indianapolis accepted this new trend in music. Singer Jimmy Guilford remembers practicing on the street corners of east Indianapolis and then trying to sell a song to the record companies on the west side of town.⁴ Guilford and his group, the Four Sounds, were lucky enough to record and then tour with a doo-wop revue during the 1950s, as was Indianapolis native Thurston Harris, who recorded the hit "Little Bitty Pretty One" in 1957. Although Chicago and Detroit always held the major recording studios, until the mid-sixties Indianapolis was able to establish a small niche for up and coming musicians. As the sixties progressed, the local music scene declined in popularity and scale, resulting in the recording companies pulling up stakes and leaving town. This created a drought in the recording of black music in Indianapolis. To most bands, such as the Presidents from

⁴ Interview, author with Jimmy Guilford, vocalist, March 22, 2002. Guilford recalled taking a record player and a stack of 78 RPM records to these recording studios hoping to persuade a talent scout to sign them to a deal. Guilford and his friends practiced daily on the street corners adjacent to Martindale Avenue on the east side of Indianapolis. They were familiar with the popular songs of the day, and took the record player with them for accompaniment during their tryout.

Louisville, Kentucky, Indianapolis was merely a stopover on the way to Detroit or Chicago for a recording session. However, with the rising popularity of soul and a plethora of emerging musicians, the Indianapolis black music scene was about to change.

As the sixties progressed, a number of major events precluded the rise of the soul and funk music scene. Beginning in late 1968, several new record labels came into existence for the sole purpose of recording local black entertainment. The formation of WTLC-FM as the first FM station in the area to play black music gave local musicians and these new record companies a chance to promote their records. As a result, the nightclub and live music scene began to reemerge as an important part of the black community.

One of the first big recordings to come from these new labels was the Highlighters' "Poppin' Popcorn."⁵ Made up of Indianapolis residents, the Highlighters began as a showband, playing mainly cover songs and supporting traveling artists such as Patti Labelle and Syl Johnson. Released on Paul Major's Rojam label in 1969, the record sold extremely well within the city. Major, who was also a deejay at WGEE-AM, started the label to help promote local acts that frequented the nightclub stage.⁶ He saw the large demand for soul music and thought that records by local musicians from within the community would sell well. There were very few locally produced songs on the radio at this time, and listeners were beginning to clamor for recordings by their favorite local artists.

⁵ The Highlighters, "Poppin' Popcorn," Rojam 001, 1969. While most Indianapolis soul and funk singles were recorded at Ohmit Studios, "Poppin' Popcorn" was recorded at Midwest Studios, located at 6030 E. 30th Street in Indianapolis.

⁶ Interview, Eothen Alapatt with James Brantley, bassist, Summer, 2001, online transcription, Stones Throw Records, <http://www.stonesthrow.com>. Accessed March 11, 2002.

In the late sixties, the relationship between performers, deejays, and record distributors was very cordial. Highlighters vocalist James Bell remembers that everyone, from the deejays at WGEE and WTLC and the record distributors to the local consumers that purchased the records, were all looking to help Indianapolis musicians make it big. Indianapolis residents took pride in successful performers from the community, such as Wes Montgomery, Thurston Harris, and in later years, Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds and his band, Manchild. Bell also recalled that he personally used to deliver records to places like Arlene’s House of Music and Jerry Hermann’s record store downtown on the Circle. Local bands did not have connections with national record labels, nor did their labels have publicity or distribution departments; the musicians did the work themselves. Many record stores would oftentimes sell records of local musicians on consignment, and if they sold well, the store would eventually buy them directly from the band. Consignment was something that only occurred in places like Indianapolis, where musicians had strong relationships with others in the music business. Bell recalled that for most performers, selling records and performing live was secondary income; nearly every musician had a steady job Monday through Friday.⁷ A master plumber and former factory worker at Ford Motor Company, Bell started Three Diamonds records and released two 45s by the Highlighters, both of which he distributed.⁸ Beginning on Thursday night, musicians worked hard to sell records, play excellent live shows, and if lucky, spend time in the

⁷ Interview, author with James Bell, December 9, 2002.

⁸ Interview, Eothen Alapatt with James Bell, Summer, 2001, online transcription, Stones Throw Records, <http://www.stonesthrow.com>. Accessed March 11, 2002. “I was at work at Ford Motor Company at the time,” James Bell said. “I was a production checker, so I could always get away and take a break, then catch up. So I went into the bathroom, blocked the door, got some cardboard and sat on the toilet. I wrote the “Funky 16 Corners” in like ten minutes. I write on ideas – if something comes to my head, I write about it. I’d completed the song while I was on the line, singing parts.”

studio recording what they hoped would be their next, or first, big hit. In Indianapolis, musicians, record producers, and distributors could be the same people – the “Naptown Sound” was Indianapolis’ black community.

When James Bell started Three Diamonds records in 1969, he realized that he needed to release a hit that would not only help pay the bills, but also garner the Highlighters increased notoriety through radio play and frequent live shows. As a live performer, Bell was familiar with what songs made people dance, cry, or smile at the nightclub. He knew what types of songs the audience usually requested. So, when he released “The Funky 16 Corners,” an upbeat, funky dance number similar to what was popular on the national charts, it was no surprise that it sold remarkably well. Three Diamonds was one of the many Indianapolis record companies that entered the business because they knew what would sell. Simon Frith noted that records were made according to the popular trends of the time. Companies such as LAMP, Knaptown, Blue Eagle, and others all released records that reflected not only popular trends in national soul and funk recordings, but the common interests and desires (black pride, community pride) of Indianapolis’ black community. They could do this because they were so connected to that community that they knew its interests and desires.

The most influential and powerful recording company in Indianapolis during the late sixties and early seventies was Herb Miller’s LAMP label. Emerging from the ashes of the sad state of the mid-sixties music scene, Howard Ladin and Miller established Ladin and Miller Productions (LAMP) in 1969 with hopes of cashing in on the popularity of soul in Indianapolis. Miller got into making records after years of being the social director and event booker for the Defiants Club, one of the largest social clubs in the city.

Social clubs were very popular during the era of soul.⁹ They were not only a way for African Americans to get involved with their community through charity and fundraising, but also an opportunity to socialize with their neighbors. Many club gatherings featured theme dances and live music, and by the late sixties, most of the bookings that Miller was making were for live soul bands such as the Moonlighters, the Highlighters and Billy Ball and the Upsetters.¹⁰ For Miller, starting a record company was the next step in a natural progression; he had booked bands for years and later managed them. In fact, Miller was the first manager for the wildly popular Highlighters. LAMP could offer bands the entire package of management, recording, booking, and connections with Atlantic Records for national distribution.¹¹

Miller's other venture, L&M Productions, also served as a vehicle to help promote the local acts signed to his label. L&M booked major national acts that came through Indianapolis and played at such venues as Bush Stadium and Riverside Park. Oftentimes, Miller had his own stable of artists play these shows that gave them an opportunity to perform in front of a large crowd.¹² Miller's experience in concert

⁹ Interview, author with Jason Yoder, historian, November 13, 2002.

¹⁰ Indianapolis Recorder, "Butter Your Popcorn Dance at 20 Grand Room," October 18, 1969. Miller promoted several dances in the city, including the Defiants Club gala, the Temptation Ball. Held at the 20 Grand, the dance featured the music of the Highlighters and the Embers and was emceed by WTLC deejay Spider Harrison.

¹¹ Recorder, "L&M Production Plans Combine," September 20, 1969. Miller and Ladin hoped that LAMP would be an music empire, much like Motown, Stax, or Chess Records. The goal was to unite smaller production companies under the L&M banner. L&M felt that their main draw was the "unlimited national contacts" that were forged during the Vanguards first U.S. tour. According the article, L&M also had thirty-five distributors who would handle record releases and fifty deejays throughout the country that would play a record once it came out.

¹² Recorder, "Black Project Destroyed by Black[s], Promoter Complains," August 23, 1969. Penned by L&M Productions president Herb Miller, this letter condemned the actions of a largely black audience at a music festival in downtown in Indianapolis. On August 6, 1969, L&M Productions provided the entertainment for the Upswing Soularoma at Bush Stadium. This was one of the many concerts and revues promoted by L&M during the late sixties. During the concert, small pockets of violence erupted over gambling dispute between two gangs of black

promotion and familiarity with the popular soul songs helped him form a stable of artists that he thought would bring his new LAMP record label the most success. LAMP first released a record in 1969, and its catalog featured such acts as Allen King and the Pearls, Ebony Rhythm Funk Campaign, and Billy Ball and the Upsetters.¹³ The Vanguards were the most popular group on the LAMP label, recording several songs including their big hit “Somebody Please” that went number one in Indianapolis and Cincinnati.¹⁴ The song was so popular that Atlantic later picked up its distribution, which gave the band enough notoriety to headline a tour throughout the eastern United States during 1970. It was hoped the deal with Atlantic would lead to greater exposure for LAMP, the Vanguards, and other Indianapolis bands, but the deal never lived up to its initial promise.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it showed that the Indianapolis sound was catching on and was growing in popularity in other areas besides Indianapolis.

youths. Instead of coming together, enjoying the music, and enriching the community, these groups chose instead to settle their differences violently, which in turn disrupted the entire audience and the performers. At one point, WTLC disc jockey Ralph Stone took to the microphone and demanded the crowd stop acting like “colored people” and “Negroes” and start acting like “black people.” This again was further evidence of the importance WTLC and its deejays played in the community as Stone positively and proudly asserted the idea of being black in Indianapolis and how important each person was to improving the status of the black community. The concert was supposed to be for the benefit of the local black community and evidence that blacks could organize a positive event for the community without incident, yet it turned into the opposite.

¹³ Recorder, “L&M Productions Organize Record and Publishing Co.,” June 21, 1969.

¹⁴ Recorder, “Lamp Records Score Again,” March 28, 1970. “The Vanguards currently have the no. #7 tune in Indianapolis, no. #4 in Los Angeles, no. #4 in Washington D.C., no. #14 in Columbus, Ohio and picked to reach the TOP 10 by all National Trade Paper.” Also see Recorder, advertisement for LAMP Records, May 16, 1970.

¹⁵ Recorder, “Herb Miller of Lamp Records Signs Distribution Deal with Atlantic Records,” April 18, 1970. The agreement stated that Atlantic would provide distribution of and promotion for all of LAMPs releases. LAMP artists would also be under contract to Atlantic Records and “have the same opportunity as Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Brook Benton and other such artists connected with Atlantic to become million selling record artists.” This was the first national deal inked by any Indianapolis record company to have their recordings distributed nationally.

Miller felt that the deal with Atlantic would take LAMP into a new realm of fame and fortune that could rival Berry Gordy's Motown Empire in Detroit. Motown was the biggest record company nearest to Indianapolis and was the largest recorder and distributor of soul music during the late sixties. Miller thought that if the Vanguards and the rest of the LAMP stable sold enough records he could become the "next Berry Gordy."¹⁶ Despite his lofty ambitions, Miller's dream was short-lived. He branched out into acid rock (The Squids) and political, spoken word recordings (The Orange Wedge), yet LAMP records never achieved the success Miller had hoped for. The last record released by LAMP was 1972's "You Made Me Everything" by the Words of Wisdom, produced by WTLC deejay Rickie Clark.¹⁷ Seeing his record company fall apart, Miller turned to other ventures and became heavily involved with drugs. However, Miller's legacy lives on through the few magical recordings made by LAMP.

The LAMP recordings set the standard by which all other Indianapolis soul recordings are judged. The sound and messages of LAMP recordings reflected the tastes of the local community. With the diversity of LAMP's catalog, from slow ballads to upbeat dance numbers, Miller's label covered every base. As social director for the Defiants Club, Miller understood what Indianapolis' black audience would look for in a song and a performer. Therefore, he recruited bands that could sell records and perform live. He knew that a blistering live performance equaled more record sales and when a new dance became popular, LAMP recorded a dance song to match. It recorded a song based on the "Popcorn" called "Carmel Corn" by Billy Ball and the Upsetters. When the Indianapolis community became worried about a growing drug epidemic, LAMP released

¹⁶ Interview, author with Jason Yoder, November 13, 2002. Also see Recorder, "L&M Productions Offers Naptown Sound," September 13, 1969.

¹⁷ The Words of Wisdom, "You Made Me Everything," Lamp 95, 1972.

“Drugs Ain’t Cool” by the Ebony Rhythm Funk Campaign. As songs about black pride and unity became popular, the Moonlighters came out with “Right On Brother.” LAMP saw the demand for albums that responded to the local concerns and trends and seized upon it. As the biggest record label in town, LAMP set the benchmark for all other record companies to pursue. Other smaller Indianapolis labels followed LAMP’s example and signed artists and releasing records based on what the popular trends were in soul and funk music.

One Indianapolis record label that followed LAMP’s lead was Jerry Herman’s Lulu label. Named for his daughter, Lulu began in a similar fashion to Herb Miller’s label. Since Herman owned a downtown record store, he knew what did or did not sell. By 1970, many of his downtown customers were African Americans seeking out the best and latest soul recordings. Herman was familiar with many of the local soul bands and hired several of his favorites to make records for him until 1974. Although Lulu only released between six and ten records, several sold quite well. “Shake What Your Mama Gave You” by Allison and Calvin Turner sold remarkably well, and became a regional hit. In fact, the record was pressed four times and was released on Lulu, Custom LAMP, Chicago’s Checker label, and Atlantic Records.¹⁸ “The Kick,” an anti-drug dance number recorded by the Rhythm Machine, was also a local hit. Lulu’s recordings stand out because they are indicative of popular local soul music trends at the time. Herman’s advantage was that he bought and sold records, knew what the local audience was listening to, and thus he catered to their desires for all types of soul, from slow love songs to upbeat dance numbers.

¹⁸ Interview, author with Jason Yoder, November 13, 2002. For more on Yoder’s vast research into Indiana and Indianapolis soul artists, please see <http://www.indiana45s.com>.

Although LAMP and Lulu dominated the local soul record scene, several smaller labels released excellent records throughout the early seventies. Despite the small size of labels such as Blue Eagle and Knaptown, they too knew what kind of music would sell in Indianapolis. The market dictated what music these labels sought out and who received record contracts. The Blue Eagle label was a subsidiary of the Blue Eagle nightclub located at 701 Indiana Avenue. Their release of the Moonlighters “Right On Brother,” a song containing positive messages about black unity and strength, is an indication of a growing desire to hear songs of this type. Knaptown, owned by John Terrell, was quite active in 1971 and 1972 promoting their new act, the Indy 5s. Patterned after Gary’s Jackson 5, the Indy 5s were to be the next youthful African-American singing sensation and featured members ages thirteen to fifteen. This is another example of how one local record company attempted to make it big by seizing upon a popular trend at the time, no matter how short-lived the trend may be. Despite several articles in the Recorder and live performances around Indianapolis, very little was written about the band after 1971. Apparently, the dream of having Indianapolis’ own Jackson 5 faded away.¹⁹

Because of the relatively small size of Indianapolis’ record labels, they did not own their own studios. Bands bought studio time at Les Ohmit’s studio located on East

¹⁹ Recorder, “The Amazing ‘Indy 5’ and Knaptown Records Story,” May 22, 1971; Recorder, “Knaptown Records Hot New Amazing ‘Indy 5’ Brothers Record Will Skyrocket Its Way to the Top,” May 29, 1971. In these articles, Terrell trumpeted the abilities of the Indy 5 and remarked “In a big recording company like Knaptown Records, we’re awfully choosy and very selective about the recording we sign to the Knaptown Records label. We’re not just [some other company] throwing several different groups and recordings out on the market just to merely hope and see what breaks.” Terrell was probably referring to Naptown records, which seemingly would put out anything, no matter what the style, as long as it had the promise to sell. Also, Terrell noted that “A complete national tour including television appearances in major rhythm and blues markets and college campuses have been scheduled.” Despite these promises, there is very little evidence to show that the Indy 5 ever released a record, let alone had a lengthy tour. In fact, in an interview with Indianapolis soul enthusiast Jason Yoder, Terrell did not even remember the Indy 5 or any of their records. Interview, author with Jason Yoder, November 13, 2002.

Tenth Street. The overwhelming majority of local soul and funk records from the sixties and seventies came from Ohmit's studio. These recordings have several similarities, especially with regards to their sonic quality. Unlike big budget record companies and studios that allowed musicians to spend months in the recording studio, Indianapolis musicians came to Ohmit's studio ready to record. While most bands worked their records out in rehearsal, some bands, like Billy Ball and the Upsetters, played their future singles in the club first, taking into account crowd reaction and participation.²⁰ The Highlighters, on the other hand, never played a song live until it was available on vinyl.²¹ There was a lot of interchange between bands and session musicians. LAMP records had a studio band, the Ebony Rhythm Funk Campaign, which backed singing groups such as the Vanguard and the Pearls. Later, the band recorded its own songs, including the anti-drug anthem, "Drugs Ain't Cool." Clint Jones, who regularly played with Billy Ball and the Upsetters, was also a session musician for the Words of Wisdom and The Indys, an all-female singing group. This continuity of musicians between these recordings gave Indianapolis soul and funk a steady, consistent, and identifiable sound.

Although influenced by national trends in black music, Indianapolis soul and funk music definitely has its own distinct sound. The "Naptown Sound" took on a local feel that was distinctive to the city and the demands of its audience, since the performers and record labels were part of the community. Guitarist Clint Jones described Indianapolis drummers such as Matthew Watson and Dewayne Garvin as playing "in the pocket," or with a heavy emphasis on the backbeat. Researcher Jason Yoder agreed, believing that Watson was the standout performer on the majority of LAMP's records, especially the

²⁰ Interview, author with Clint Jones, musician, December 16, 2002.

²¹ Interview, author with James Bell, December 9, 2002.

up-tempo dancers where rhythm was often in the forefront. Another draw of the Indianapolis sound was the informality of the records. Songs like “Funky 16 Corners” and the Moonlighters’ “Funky Moon Meditation” sound as if they were recorded in one take. The songs were not remastered by an engineer and there were no overdubs simply because the record companies and bands did not have the budget to pay for extra time to “fix” their songs. The informal nature of these songs was reflective of the live music scene in that it was similar to what was heard at places like the 20 Grand, the Blue Eagle, and the Place to Play on a weekly basis. Although raw in comparison to today’s more refined, heavily remixed recordings, the Indianapolis sound is very intimate and inviting and gives the listener a feeling of what it was like to sit in on a recording session.

Despite the wide variety of music available to consumers during this era, from national soul and funk acts to jazz and gospel, African Americans in Indianapolis were proud to buy records of local acts. James Bell noted that everybody was looking to help each other out, and although this was true, advertising also played a significant role in the public’s record buying habits. Until 1970, the Recorder featured an entertainment page that focused on the local club scene and local music acts. Each week, there were three to five advertisements for clubs along Indiana Avenue, and later, throughout the city. If the band featured in the ad had a record out, the ad made note of it. Other articles dealt with the latest singles by local bands, the latest news about new record companies in town, and perhaps most important, the “Know Your Entertainers” section. Although not in every edition of the Recorder, these articles featured a photo of the band, the names of the members, a brief description of their sound, and what their most popular songs were. Bands featured were the Vanguard, the Pearls, the Highlighters, the Moonlighters, and

several local jazz artists as well. Local bands integrated into the community not only by band members and label owners, but also by the main black newspaper. Despite the great publicity generated by these ads, the Recorder ended these articles after 1970. Instead, ads for movie theaters, including several XXX theaters, and wire service articles about national music acts and record companies took over, pushing the local scene from the paper. This may have signaled a decline in Indianapolis' music scene or a middle class decline in interest. More likely, it reflected the growth and popularity of a new medium with local black audiences. By 1970 Indianapolis musicians relied on the radio, a much more powerful form of media that broadcast their songs, their message, and let the city know what their band was all about.

Radio and the Black Community

One of the most important elements in the success of Indianapolis' black music scene was radio. In the late sixties, FM radio was brand new and considered "underground," piquing curiosities and getting listeners to tune in. Thus, when WTLC started in 1968, listeners were not only curious about the new station and its programming, but also about this new brand of high quality, cutting edge radio.²² With WTLC, African-Americans had a high-powered station for themselves. The station's black deejays played jazz, soul, blues, and gospel, and generally provided programming that appealed to the majority of the black community. In Sound Effects, Simon Frith discusses how "gatekeepers" play an important role in the music industry. According to

²² Interview, author with Rickie Clark, WTLC deejay, January 11, 2003. Clark pointed out that WTLC's influence was not fully realized in the community until the early seventies when FM radios became more common in cars and in homes. Prior to that, most cars came with AM radios only, so not everyone was able to listen to the station.

Frith, the radio disc jockey is the most important gatekeeper as he is in charge of not only what songs get played, but also how often. Frith also believes that the FM disc jockey of the late sixties performed his job with great sincerity, and cared not only about his listeners, but also the music itself. WTLC's disc jockeys cared about the status of their community and wanted to promote and strengthen it, whether through a song, an on-site broadcast, or through the expression of political, cultural, or social beliefs. At WTLC, the deejays were black, the music was black, and the result was a station that spoke to and on behalf of the black population.

Despite WTLC's great popularity, some in the African-American community initially met the station with great skepticism. When the station began broadcasting in 1968, it was owned by a group of both white and black businessmen, which concerned many residents. It was not until 1973 that the station became fully black owned. Residents feared that the station's programming would be determined by the white ownership and that music and talk shows that discussed pertinent black issues would be shelved in favor of less political, more moderate programming. One concerned reader of the Recorder wrote that, "Possibly the best kept secret of all is that the fact that the all-important job of general manager is held down by an individual who is not a 'soul brother.' All of the real 'soul personnel' have been relegated to positions of broadcasting robots. 'Whitey' pushes the buttons and the 'soul brothers and sisters' do as they are told or else."²³ Another reader felt that there were not enough African Americans in Marion County, or enough interest in soul programming, to support the station.²⁴ These worries never came to fruition, as by the early seventies WTLC had established itself as the first

²³ Recorder, "Soul Station is Questioned by Subscriber," September 7, 1968.

²⁴ Recorder, "Readers Questions Need of Soul Station, Negro Leaders," September 21, 1968.

station to provide around the clock programming for African Americans.²⁵ WGEE, which first broadcasted in early 1968, predated WTLC yet featured only twelve hours of black music and related programming from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. every day. Local radio personalities relished their role as gatekeepers, connecting soul music to Indianapolis' black community by becoming active in community events, doing live broadcasts from local businesses, and helping promote local bands through consistent radio play.

WTLC provided local musicians with an excellent opportunity to have their records played on the air. Both James Bell and Clint Jones remembered that most deejays were very friendly and more than anything, out to help local musicians succeed. Deejays such as WTLC's Spider Harrison and WGEE's Paul Major did not require kickbacks or "payola" to play records; if it was good, they would play it.²⁶ Deejays had the power to make or break a record, and in the case of the Highlighters' "Poppin' Popcorn," radio play made the song a hit. Bassist James Brantley recalled, "We [were] number two for three weeks in a row. Spider played it. I handed him the record, got him to play it. Paul [Major] was playing it. We had all kinds of kids calling the radio station. Kids flooded the station. They didn't have call waiting and all that back then, they had to

²⁵ Michelle D. Hale, "WTLC (105.7 FM; 1310 AM)," in David Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows, editors, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1403. WTLC debuted in 1968 under the ownership of a "biracial group of Marion County Democrats." A dispute over the station's management style and level of community service led to the sale of the station to a group of black investors led by Dr. Frank Lloyd in 1973. The station was not just known for its music, but also its "full-service news coverage" and several talk programs. In 1981, WTLC was sold to an African-American radio chain out of Philadelphia. The station was sold again in 1987, and yet again during the 1990s and is currently owned by nationwide radio conglomerate, Radio One. Despite the change in ownership, the station is still an excellent source of news and community awareness, and of course, the finest in contemporary black music.

²⁶ Interview, author with James Bell, December 9, 2002.

take [the phone] off the line!”²⁷ Other songs, such as “Funky 16 Corners” and several Vanguards hits were also very popular among WTLC’s and WGEE’s black listeners.²⁸

Each week, WTLC released the “Mean 15” list of top soul songs. Former deejay Rickie Clark remembered that the “Mean 15” was calculated using a specific formula that took the national sales charts, local record store sales and listener requests all into account.²⁹ Many times, local songs reached number one or two, outdistancing the most popular national songs of the day. The Ayr-Way department store at 2333 Lafayette Road posted WTLC’s weekly survey that listed the top soul records of the week. The Ayr-Way’s claim to fame, however, was the “Soul Browser Center,” a list of forty-eight records available for the special low price of sixty-nine cents.³⁰ WTLC deejays and staff played an instrumental role in selecting the records, many of which were locally produced and recorded.³¹ WTLC had a huge play list, covering everything from soul and funk to blues and gospel in a given hour, yet deejays always found time to promote popular local recordings on the air, as well as in the record stores.

Unlike today where most disc jockeys are merely names and voices, WTLC’s crew of deejays were well known and respected throughout the black community. In Indianapolis, local deejays expanded the gatekeeper’s role outside the studio to dances and other local events. Deejays regularly emceed social club dances at the IBEW Hall,

²⁷ Interview, Eothen Alapatt with James Brantley, Summer, 2001.

²⁸ Recorder, advertisement for WGEE-AM, October 5, 1968. WGEE played soul in the midday hours, eventually going off the air in the late evening. WGEE featured several prominent deejays, including Rojam Records entrepreneur, “King of Soul” Paul Major, “Prince of Soul” Dave Felder, and “Duke of Soul” Van Dunn. WGEE proclaimed itself as the “New Sound of Super Soul,” yet it fell out of favor with Indianapolis listeners once WTLC established itself and FM radio became more common.

²⁹ Interview, author with Rickie Clark, January 13, 2003.

³⁰ See Appendix B, Image 9.

³¹ Recorder, advertisement for Ayr-Way Department Stores, March 20, 1971.

Northside Armory, or teen dances at St. Rita's school. Emcees were also popular in the nightclubs. Spider Harrison, Rickie Clark, Fred Moore, and other personalities frequently emceed nightly concerts or events at places like the 20 Grand, the Demonstrators, the Hub-Bub, and the Inn Crowd. Harrison was especially popular because of his flamboyant personality and his ability to entertain the crowd and get them excited for a night of hard-hitting soul and funk. Harrison was also the first Indianapolis deejay to cut a record. Featuring the Highlighters, Harrison's "Beautiful Day" was released by Lulu Records in 1970.³²

WTLC occasionally broadcast live from nightclubs, but most live broadcasts took place at sponsoring businesses. Live broadcasts featured guests, occasional live performances by bands, and plenty of free prizes. Through these on-site broadcasts, WTLC's deejays established a strong connection to local businesses, many of them owned by blacks. WTLC did not help just local musicians and record companies, but also small businesses as well, further solidifying their role in the black community. Most blacks realized that WTLC was not just out to increase its number of listeners, but also to make a difference and improve life in the black community. If Spider Harrison, Thomas "Sparkle Soxx" Griffin, or "Solid Gold" Rickie Clark broadcast from a certain restaurant or store, it gave credibility to that business and status within the community. The FM disc jockeys of the sixties and seventies were a special group of individuals who not only loved the music they played, but also the musicians, the listeners, and the community as a whole. WTLC's deejays crossed the boundaries between musicians, club goers and local

³² Spider Harrison, "Beautiful Day," Lulu 9703, 1969; see also Recorder, "Butter Your Popcorn Dance at 20 Grand Room" October 18, 1969. Although never recorded, Harrison also sang "I Know Who You Been Sockin' It To" at several dances. Several other emcees, including Baby Leon and Mr. Tee, best known for their vocal work with the Presidents, also recorded singles in Indianapolis. Most emcees performed during the set breaks for the main attraction.

businesses. They were mediators between these groups, helping them get together and assisting each other financially and emotionally.

Although WTLC was a great help to the moderate local soul and funk scene, the station proved instrumental in bringing to light more radical political opinions. Like the Recorder, WTLC generally presented a moderate viewpoint, yet there were some radical factions that clearly influenced the programming of the station in the late sixties and early seventies. Explicitly political or radical music received little airplay, but radical deejays and talk shows utilized the airwaves to express their beliefs and values. One of the most instrumental and charismatic personalities of this era was Richard Bailey, later known as Jomo Kali, who hosted a popular jazz show that featured avant-garde jazz and political discourse. Bailey was Indianapolis' version of Gil Scott-Heron, a radical poet from New York who spoke out about injustice, cultural nationalism, and blackness while accompanied by African percussion. Scott-Heron, the Last Poets, and the Watts Prophets were among a group of radical, outspoken poets that grew in popularity as cultural and Black Nationalism became more widespread. Although such radical poetry did not fully catch on in Indianapolis' black community, Bailey found an audience in the local university community. Bailey, percussionist John Humphrey, and an accompanying troupe of dancers, drummers, and other poets played to sold out crowds at Butler University and Indiana University. According to Humphrey, Bailey's poetry was very radical, and regularly spoke of revolution, Black Power, and mistrust of the white establishment.³³

Bailey's radical radio show was one example of how WTLC's programming became increasingly oriented to the black community. The station represented a range of

³³ Interview, author with John Humphrey, percussionist, December 16, 2002.

political views, including minority radical views. In 1973, Dr. Frank Lloyd, Sr. became the sole owner of WTLC, purchasing total control of the station from his two white partners and making the station wholly black owned. Rickie Clark noted that WTLC was very careful to present all sides of each story and a variety of political perspectives. In fact, station management supported the Black Radical Action Project (BRAP) and allowed them to use the airwaves to discuss their political platform. The many deejays who worked at the station encompassed all political beliefs, which showed during their programs. Station managers and program directors required deejays to become involved the community, whether through joining an organization like the NAACP or the SCLC, or being a well informed member of the community.³⁴

Representative Crawford felt that WTLC was crucial to furthering black unity through the mass communication of knowledge and as a vehicle of expression, and that if it had not been around, Indianapolis' African-American population would be ten years behind where it is today. WTLC made listeners think and encouraged them to become involved in their community. Programs like "Mozell in the Morning," hosted by Reverend Mozell Sanders, called attention to shortcomings in equal opportunity hiring practices and housing discrimination and oftentimes called for protests at the Capitol or local businesses. Crawford hosted a program with Snooky Hendricks and the College Room's Ben Bell called "Hotline" that aired from 11:30 to midnight. The show was an open line to the community, allowing for residents to call in and voice their displeasure with local government and the police. "Hotline" alerted the community to many issues

³⁴ Interview, author with Rickie Clark, January 13, 2003.

that were not discussed in the mainstream press and heightened the consciousness of the local black community through intelligent and informed discussion.³⁵

The same group that hosted the “Hotline” program on WTLC was heavily involved in Indianapolis’ jazz scene. Most Indianapolis militants found local soul and funk music lacking in political message, so instead they turned to avant-garde jazz. The Black Radical Action Project and other radicals felt that such music most emphatically represented their beliefs. Although the Indianapolis jazz scene dwindled throughout the 1960s and had also lessened in popularity amongst young African Americans, there was still great interest in the latest recordings of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Archie Shepp, and Albert Ayler in certain circles. These artists, according to Representative William Crawford, were more politically and culturally conscious than most popular soul artists. The BRAP and its affiliate, the Jazz Workers Club, took a liking to jazz because these artists did not “take any shit,” and were moving their art forward, creating provocative and innovative sounds that broke away from old traditions.³⁶ Avant-garde jazz found a home on WTLC as Bailey regularly played popular artists of the day and even several local artists. Clint Jones remembered bringing tapes of his band, the jazz-fusion project Next Exit, to Bailey, who gladly played them. This surprised Jones because his band was having an extremely difficult time finding gigs in Indianapolis since very few blacks were into jazz fusion; all the masses wanted was soul.³⁷

With the increased exposure that WTLC gave avant-garde jazz in Indianapolis, the music became more popular. Fans who became tired of the local soul and funk scene began searching for exciting, groundbreaking, and adventurous jazz in nightclubs away

³⁵ Interview, author with Representative Crawford, December 20, 2002.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Interview, author with Clint Jones, December 16, 2002.

from Indiana Avenue and in the more popular nightclubs such as the 20 Grand. Clubs such as the 19th Hole, the Topper, and the Jazz Workers Club featured a more aggressive and exciting type of jazz than what was heard at the British Lounge or the J&J Lounge. Members of the Black Radical Action Project and other militants regularly attended these clubs because they felt jazz was much more political than the soul and R&B that was now the toast of the town. The BRAP could relate to this form of jazz, as they too were moving forward, breaking from the old traditions of assimilation and acceptance that Dr. Martin Luther King had preached since the mid-1950s.

For many cultural nationalists like the BRAP, jazz performance was the ideal vehicle utilized by African-American performers for expressing black pride. John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Miles Davis, and Albert Ayler were at the forefront of a politically expressive jazz movement that attempted to recreate black opinions and feelings through music. For example, Archie Shepp was a multi-talented artist whose anger and rage towards social injustice was ever-present in his work. Shepp said:

There seems to be a thing about being angry in this country, and the people who have the most right to be angriest are expected to be the least aggressive. I am an American Negro. Of course, I'm angry. I have every right to be angry. That's in my music. A good deal of that. Bitter. Rage. America's done a lot to me which is wrong.³⁸

Many of Shepp's releases featured harsh and unrelenting solos that sought to musically "paint" a picture of the African Americans experience and their bitterness. For John Coltrane, it took coming clean from his heroin habit to fully realize what he needed to do with his music. Coltrane focused on the cultural traditions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and moved himself to the forefront of the free jazz movement by making his music

³⁸ Patricia Willard, liner notes to Archie Shepp, Live in San Francisco, Impulse IMD-254, 11-12.

more political. Coltrane used torrents of sound to express his anger, pain, and sorrow. A spiritual message also began to radiate from his music. In his autobiography, Miles Davis agreed that Coltrane began to express through music what H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael were saying with their words, and what the Last Poets and Amiri Baraka said with poetry. Davis felt that Coltrane

represented, for many blacks, the fire and passion and rage and anger and rebellion and love they felt, especially among the young black intellectuals and revolutionaries of that time. He played what they felt inside and were expressing through riots “burn, baby, burn” - that were taking place everywhere. It was about revolution for a lot of young black people - Afro hairdos, dashikis, black power, fists raised in the air. Coltrane was their symbol, their pride - their beautiful, black revolutionary pride.³⁹

Cultural nationalists felt jazz held great significance because it was a truer representation of black culture and consciousness than what soul and funk provided. Indianapolis’ soul and funk music was not overtly political or radical because militant blacks were not the intended audience for this music. Nevertheless, both types of music reflected, supported, and spoke directly to certain portions the black community. As the most important “gatekeeper” in the city, WTLC was a tremendous supporter of all aspects of the black community and responded to the variety of beliefs and concerns among local African Americans by representing and supporting that diversity in their programming. WTLC, and to some extent WGEE, catered to all musical tastes, playing not just soul, funk, blues, and gospel, but also political, avant-garde jazz that appealed to only a small portion of their listeners. WTLC also lent its airwaves to groups with an assortment of political ideologies, some more militant than others. WTLC was

³⁹ Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, Miles: the Autobiography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 286.

instrumental in promoting and supporting a wide variety of political beliefs and the musical tastes that coincided with each.

Making music that was popular was a different though equally important way of speaking to the black community. Although most black musicians were aware and informed about community issues and felt strongly about black pride, they were also concerned about whether or not their records sold. Local musicians knew that “less danceable, more overtly political music often made little impact on the national record charts.”⁴⁰ Locally produced soul and funk songs by the Highlighters, the Rhythm Machine, and the Moonlighters spoke to an Indianapolis audience that was not involved with militant or violent organizations. To the more politically inclined, the local soul and funk scene was more about partying than politics and really held no interest for them. However, locally produced soul and funk music was widely accepted by the majority of the African-American public because of its moderate message. Songs were not laden with heavily political or threatening themes but rather messages of black unity, community awareness, and perhaps most important, community pride which resonated with Indianapolis’ politically moderate majority.

Behind the Music: The Messages of Indianapolis Soul and Funk

A good deal of soul and funk music recorded in the late sixties and early seventies contained strong messages about Black Power, racism, cultural nationalism, and the war on drugs, yet songs recorded in Indianapolis were moderate in nature. Some artists like the Rhythm Machine and the Ebony Rhythm Funk Campaign dealt with issues like the

⁴⁰ William Van Deburg, *A New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 215.

growing drug epidemic, but for the most part, locally produced soul and funk records favored songs about love, partying, and dancing. The variety of song topics and messages show how intertwined the music was with the community, as many songs not only reflected the community's values and beliefs, but also promoted the community's finer points. According to James Bell, songs with a tight groove for dancing and partying were the most popular, yet some listeners appreciated songs with a solid, uplifting message, like the Moonlighters "Right On, Brother," or the Four Sensations' "Born Black." Bell said, "It was important to have a good message in your song, but the groove was more important. People were not just going to sit there and listen to this message and not dance. In most cases, they might not even care what [the singer] was saying. But, if you gave the audience something they could relate to, you could slide the message in and it sometimes made an impact."⁴¹ In a live setting, where the public is more interested in partying than active listening, message songs with a tight groove and a catchy hook usually went over well. Despite a lukewarm response to songs with heavy political messages, several artists managed to record and sell songs that promoted black unity and pride, community pride, and anti-drug messages.

Although there was a limited number of locally produced soul and funk records released between 1968 and 1974, the song topics and messages represented a cross-section of what national artists were recording at that time. Songs about new loves, old loves and unrequited loves were popular, as were songs about popular dances of the time, and songs about black pride and community pride as well. Radical or overtly political songs were not popular among local artists mainly because there was not a market for them. Guitarist Clint Jones remembered writing scathing critiques of Lyndon Johnson

⁴¹ Interview, author with James Bell, December 9, 2002.

and Richard Nixon, yet they were so radical, and at times so obscene, that no record company would ever have released them.⁴² Unlike nationally known artists Gil Scott-Heron, the Last Poets, and the Watts Prophets, who prided themselves on their revolutionary stance and radical ideas, Indianapolis musicians stuck with what would sell to a largely moderate local audience.⁴³ Local artists believed if they could turn on the selective Indianapolis audience to their sound, then perhaps they could make it as soul superstars.

Because the majority of Indianapolis soul and funk recordings were never distributed outside of the city, artists commonly alluded to well-known landmarks, nightclubs, and dances in their songs. “Tightening Up Your Popcorn,” by Louisville transplant Big Daddy Graham was an ode to the happening Indianapolis club scene. It compared club-goers’ ability to dance and party with other well-known musical hotbeds such as Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Louisville. The song utilized the old gospel technique of call and response between Graham and Presidents’ vocalist Baby Leon. They remarked about the skill of the dancers doing the “Popcorn” and the “Tighten Up,” two popular dances of the time: “Are they doing it in Indy? Yeah,” Leon responded, “can’t do it better than here in Indy!” The song also mentions the J&J Lounge, the Blue

⁴² Interview, author with Clint Jones, December 16, 2002. Like most songwriters, Jones wrote songs based on events in his life or major news happenings that struck a chord with him. At the time he joined Billy Ball and the Upsetters, Jones had several friends get sent to Vietnam. He did not understand why his friends were going to fight a war that the United States was destined to lose, so he not only started protesting the war, but also writing songs critical of Presidents Johnson and Nixon. Two of his unreleased compositions included “I Wonder if Tricky Dick Has A Big Dick” and “LBJ is P-U-S-S-Y.”

⁴³ For more on Gil Scott-Heron, The Last Poets and The Watts Prophets, please see: Van Deburg, A New Day in Babylon, 214-216; Rickey Vincent, Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1996), 161-62; Craig Werner, A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race and the Soul of America (New York: Plume, 1998). See also: The Last Poets, The Last Poets, Douglas 3, 1970; The Last Poets, This Is Madness, Douglas 7, 1971; Gil Scott-Heron, The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, Flying Dutchman 3818, 1974; The Watts Prophets, Rappin’ Black in a White World, ALA 1971, 1971.

Eagle, and the Place to Play, several popular nightclubs of the time that Graham and Baby Leon played in nearly every week. This song had the local flavor and the groove to make it a hit in the city.⁴⁴ As listeners related to these references the by-product was an increase in community pride and recognition. Indianapolis residents were not only proud to hear their city lauded in a song, but also to hear their abilities as dancers and partiers championed as well

Another song that claimed the superiority of Indianapolis soul and funk scene is “Soul City” by Jazzie Cazzie and the Eight Sounds. Formerly known as the Diplomats, Jazzie Cazzie was fronted by Rodney Stepp, who later arranged for such artists as The Spinners. “Soul City” is a traditional, mid-tempo soul song with clear, discernable lyrics. Released on Knaptown Records, the song placed Indianapolis at the forefront of the African-American soul and dance music scene, claiming that not only the music and clubs were the best, but also the dancers and the women too.⁴⁵ Like James Bell said, consumers were proud to purchase records of local artists, and especially so when the record championed their hometown’s music scene.⁴⁶ Consumers felt they were not only purchasing a piece of their city’s heritage, but also helping out a neighbor or friend that had the potential to someday make it big.

Indianapolis soul and funk recordings provided not only an outlet for African Americans to be proud of their hometown and its musical legacy, but also a way to increase black unity with their neighbors. After James Brown’s “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud),” the recording industry began to push for more songs that furthered black unity and pride. This song provided a model of how musicians could combine a

⁴⁴ Big Daddy Graham, “Tightening Your Popcorn,” C.A.M. Association 160, 1969

⁴⁵ Jazzie Cazzie and the Eight Sounds, “Soul City,” Knaptown 1011, 1969.

⁴⁶ Interview, author with James Bell, December 9, 2002.

clear political message with a danceable and popular song. Popular artists could now record songs that would not only reflect the public's buying preferences, but also make a political point. Songs such as Aretha Franklin's "Spirit in the Dark," and "Respect," Curtis Mayfield's "We People Are Darker Than Blue" and "We're A Winner," along with "Is It Because I'm Black?" by Syl Johnson, and "We Got More Soul" by Dyke and the Blazers made a profound impact on African Americans nationwide. There was a political agenda evident in many popular soul songs of the era. As a response to these national trends, local musicians began to write songs that spoke to their local consumer base and also reflected the sentiments expressed in these songs about black pride.

The Indianapolis soul recording that put the greatest emphasis on black pride is the Four Sensations' "Born Black." The song provides insight into the moderate views and opinions of the African-American community, while also making listeners feel proud of their blackness. "Born Black" tells the story of one man's journey up from the bottom of society, as he worked for respect and towards the goal of equality. The song ultimately becomes a demand for respect from the white society.

Born black – at the bottom of the world
Born black – with no way upstairs
Born black – well, I ain't gonna stay down here
Born black – with nothin' but my tears and prayers

Remember, once upon a time,
They made me feel ashamed
But today, I stand so proud,
So don't call me by any other name.

Although the song's message is slightly stronger than most Indianapolis soul recordings, it still represents the moderate views of the black community. The song illustrates a sense of black pride and commitment to furthering the cause of civil rights and gaining

equality in society. One line in the song is especially telling: “I’m black and I’m proud, but you look at your skin and I’ll look at mine.” For generations, African Americans had been told that “white is right,” both in color, style, hair, music, and art, yet as the sixties progressed those white ideals gave way to black pride and unity. The Four Sensations took advantage of the popularity of “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud),” quoting the title near the end of the song. The song broadcast the message to black and white listeners that blacks now had their own set of ideals to follow, and that their own skin color was beautiful and a source of great dignity and unity.⁴⁷

Another theme evident in Indianapolis soul and funk music was drug awareness, which helped alert listeners to a growing national epidemic. In 1969, President Richard Nixon declared drugs and drug abuse the number one enemy of the United States and made it the duty of all people to help eradicate this problem from American life. In order to gain support for a “war on drugs,” the Nixon administration fabricated inaccurate statistics about the growing number of drug addicts.⁴⁸ Despite Nixon’s gross overstatements, many people still took note, including Indianapolis’ The Rhythm Machine, which took Nixon’s challenge to heart and recorded “The Kick” as a response to the president’s statement. Drug use was common in Indianapolis, as it was in other cities. Clouds of marijuana smoke hung in the rafters of some clubs, while other patrons retreated to the bathroom for a bump of cocaine or to score a dose of heroin. In most

⁴⁷ The Four Sensations, “Born Black,” Blue Eagle 1010, 1970. The message of black pride in “Born Black” was mild as compared with other songs of the era. William Van Deburg contends that many of these songs bordered on “braggadocio.” Artists such as Nina Simone, Johnnie Taylor, and Dyke and the Blazers wrote songs based on the idea that “blacks deserved respect because they were beautiful people.” See Van Deburg, *A New Day in Babylon*, 214.

⁴⁸ Michael Schaller, Virginia Scharff, and Robert D. Schulzinger, *Present Tense: The United States Since 1945*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996), 373-74. Nixon exaggerated the number of heroin addicts, claiming they had grown from 69,000 in 1969 to 315,000 in 1970 and 559,000 in 1971, when in fact the numbers had gone up hardly at all.

circles, hard drugs like heroin, cocaine, and LSD were considered taboo and not as widespread, yet, guitarist Clint Jones remembers Indianapolis being home to many heroin addicts.⁴⁹ Although there was not a drug epidemic in Indianapolis, it was an issue that concerned many local residents, and local music discussed the problem.

The purpose of “The Kick” was two-fold: to alert the local audience to a growing drug problem and to record a message song that was suitable for a club audience. The song’s lyrics are powerful, as is singer Kevin “Flash” Ferrell’s voice. Falling somewhere between spoken word and rap, Ferrell’s words are clear and forceful. Perhaps the most important message in the song is Ferrell’s warning to listeners to be wary of friends and neighbors trying to get others hooked on drugs. Ferrell sang,

Some of our brothers and sisters are out to fool ya,
When they hand you something, give it back.
Tell ‘em you don’t need it, you’re still on the track.
Let’s get rid of the needle, the pusher, and the smack.⁵⁰

The message embedded in “The Kick” further indicates how local musicians sought to strengthen the community through music. As an integral part of the community, the Rhythm Machine did not want to see harm come to their listeners or their hometown.

Although there were many message songs that were popular on the radio, they were not necessarily appropriate for a live nightclub audience. Clint Jones referred to songs like James Brown’s “King Heroin” as “daytime music,” songs that people carefully listened to on their own time for a message and meaning, but when it came time to party and dance, they ignored the lyrics and focused on the groove.⁵¹ “The Kick,” on the other hand, was appropriate for a club audience because it featured a dance that coincided with

⁴⁹ Interview, author with Clint Jones, December 16, 2002.

⁵⁰ The Rhythm Machine, “The Kick,” Lulu 9706, 1970.

⁵¹ Interview, author with Clint Jones, December 16, 2002.

the song. The Rhythm Machine created a niche for itself in the local market as a band that could make listeners think but also dance and have a good time. Perhaps the audience did not pick up on the power of the anti-drug message while dancing at the nightclub, but it sunk in when they heard the song on the radio or at home.

Another band that responded to a rise in drug use was LAMP Records' house band, the Ebony Rhythm Funk Campaign (ERFC). The ERFC released "Drugs Ain't Cool" in 1970, also hoping to increase awareness in, and hopefully improve the quality of, the black community. However, this song has a much different feel and sound than "The Kick." Whereas "The Kick" has powerful and distinct lyrics and a tight, funky groove, "Drugs Ain't Cool" has an acid rock feel unseen in any other Indianapolis soul and funk recordings. The lyrics are almost indiscernible, hidden underneath a heavy fuzztone that gives the song a drugged, strung out feel. "Drugs Ain't Cool" attacks the drug problem from a much different angle, telling the tale of a junkie who tricks himself into thinking he has it under control while his life is spiraling out of control. The desperation in the singer's voice becomes the junkie's plea for help as he sings, "I shot smack and now I can't get back, I got a jones, somebody please help me." The song highlights the plight of the drug addict and shows how controlling a drug habit was nearly impossible. The song's powerful message did not escape listeners. Indianapolis Mayor Richard Lugar, citing the positive anti-drug message of "Drugs Ain't Cool," later issued a commendation to the band and to LAMP Records for the song's impact on the community.⁵² Like the Rhythm Machine, the ERFC sought to strengthen the community by helping bring the growing drug epidemic to light. The commendation from Mayor

⁵² Recorder, "Ebony Rhythm Clicks at the Blue Eagle," November 8, 1969.

Lugar lent further credence to the band, to its message, and to the Indianapolis soul music scene in general as an integral and important contribution by the black community.

Although soul and funk songs with a political message were in the minority, each locally produced song held special meaning for the performers and the audience.

Indianapolis artists connected with their listeners on several levels because they were all from the same tight-knit community. Nightclub attendance and record sales all indicated that many Indianapolis blacks were in tune with the local music scene. While young blacks predominantly attended live nightclub performances, older consumers bought the records and played them at home. James Bell remembered that “Poppin’ Popcorn” and “Funky 16 Corners” were purchased by people of all ages and that everybody loved those songs.⁵³ Soul music bridged a gap between the age groups and brought them together. Despite people’s differences, locally produced soul and funk music was one of the community’s common grounds.

Locally produced soul and funk music played a significant role in the lives of many African Americans during the late sixties and early seventies. Music had a special, multifaceted relationship with the black community. When they went to the club, the record store, or listened to the radio, soul was the music of choice. Songs lifted their spirits, made them dance, and made them think about their place in the black community. Within the moderate framework of the city’s black population, the sound of Indianapolis soul and funk music fueled an exciting and growing nightclub scene during the late sixties and seventies. Artists not only treated audiences to blistering performances of their original hits as heard on WTLC and WGEE, but also popular cover songs by James Brown, Dyke and the Blazers, Wilson Pickett, and others. By playing locally produced

⁵³ Interview, author with James Bell, December 9, 2002.

soul and funk songs, going out into the community for live broadcasts, and making their airwaves available for political discourse, local black radio stations also integrated music into the black community. Soul music and the black community came together through local musicians, record producers, deejays, radio shows, and the music itself. They illustrate the variety of ways that music reflected the community's beliefs as well as supported and promoted its strengths, values, and beliefs. In the late sixties and early seventies, members of Indianapolis' black community were able to hear positive representations of themselves on the radio, and at home on the many locally produced records. When times were tough, African Americans turned to music to lift their spirits and give them renewed hope, and in Indianapolis, the tight-knit relationship between the community and its music made that possible.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Nighttime is the Right Time: African-American Nightlife in Indianapolis

In the world of live music, little compares to the connection between the performer and the audience. Since the first minstrel played his lyre in the gallery, musicians have been in a position of power, able to pass along their views on spirituality, society, culture, politics, and relationships. While attending an energized performance, the audience becomes aware of messages in the music and the importance of the performer's words. Soul artists like Wilson Pickett, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Al Green, and others all commanded the attention of their audience. Black performers assumed the role of the preacher and used the stage as their "bully pulpit of empowerment" to not only uplift the spirits of the audience, but alert them to injustice and problems in Black America.¹ Although stage banter is oftentimes banal, passionate musicians are able to convey a sense of meaning and urgency to the audience in comments between songs as well as through their lyrics. In the world of soul, black audience members left concerts with a great sense of identity, pride, and unity. About the music of the Staple Singers, Mavis Staples once noted, "I truly think it helps unity and that's one of the things we are striving for....A lot of young people have told us that they go away from our shows with the single aim of trying to do better by people."² Not only the lyrics and music of the performers, but their stage banter, body language, and style all contributed to a positive and uplifting concert-going experience. The role of the performer became that of a soothsayer who helped assuage the concerns of the audience.

¹ William Van Deburg, *Black Camelot: African-American Culture Heroes in Their Times, 1960-1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 227.

² Michael Haralambos, *Soul Music: The Birth of a Black Sound in America* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 125.

As the sixties ended, musicians assumed a position alongside political leaders as spokespeople for the black community.

Although few saw Indianapolis musicians as civic leaders or political pundits, their role in bringing together the African-American community was rivaled only by the city's powerful religious leaders such as Reverend Luther Hicks, Reverend Mozell Sanders, and Dr. Andrew Brown. On Sunday morning, places of worship were the gathering places for the black community. On Friday and Saturday nights, however, Indianapolis nightclubs were the place to be. In the late sixties and early seventies, black residents came in droves to nightclubs in the 30th and 38th Street Corridors as well as Indiana Avenue.³ The musicians who played in these clubs relished the task of delivering a solid, uplifting message to the audience. William Van Deburg wrote, "After establishing a suitably groovy vibe, the skillful performer could – and did – choose to utilize this awesome power for the group good. Drenched in sweat, spangles, and spotlights, experienced practitioners of the soulful arts bonded with the romping, stomping crowd in a ritual exorcism of excessive self-pity and sub par self-esteem."⁴ In this way, Indianapolis musicians brought the black community together not only for music but also to increase community involvement and improvement. Whether it was a social club fundraiser or a "Twist" contest, Indianapolis nightclubs helped African Americans come together in a setting where the music reflected and supported the community's best interests and political moderation.

³ Throughout the chapter, "Indiana Avenue" will refer to not only clubs directly on the Avenue, but also those within close proximity to Indiana Avenue. For example, The Flame (242 Blake St.), The Pink Poodle/The New Zanzibar/The Famous Door (252 N. Capitol) and The Queen of Clubs (518 N. West St.) are all considered with those clubs directly on the Avenue.

⁴ Van Deburg, Black Camelot, 226.

Nightclubs were an important meeting place for Indianapolis' black community because it was there they could relax, have fun, and express their pride in the community and their blackness through dancing and music. In some cases, nightclubs were venues for fundraisers for local social clubs and charities, and regularly trumpeted how suitable their facilities were for such events. Social clubs such as the Blackinizers, the Demonstrators, and the Soulfonics all participated in charitable acts on behalf of the black community and held such events at local nightclubs. The Indianapolis live music scene was the cultural glue for the black community, bringing people together physically, emotionally and spiritually. During the late sixties and early seventies, Indianapolis nightlife and club activities promoted, supported, and further reflected the moderate attitudes and values of the African-American community. Some members of the black community, through participation in social clubs and fundraising for worthy causes at local nightclubs, also showed that politics and community involvement were not wholly separate from the local music scene, but rather an important part in making the music meaningful.

The Indiana Avenue Scene

During Indiana Avenue's heyday in the thirties and forties, nationally renowned acts like Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Fletcher Henderson frequently stopped in the Circle City for a gig at a club or the Walker Theatre. Indianapolis was once a hub for national artists, and was once dubbed the "Jazz Capitol of the Midwest."⁵ However, by 1968, Indianapolis became just another tour stop for some artists, while others did not

⁵ Indianapolis Recorder, advertisement for Donald Byrd and the Blackbyrds at the Indiana Convention Center, August 31, 1974.

bother passing through. Vibist Billy Wooten remarked, “I’d heard all these wonderful stories about this town called Indianapolis. I was always begging my agent, ‘Send us through Indianapolis!’ I figured I’d do some research, meet some of the old [jazz] guys. As young guys growing up, we’d hear about these fantastic musicians and all these places to play in Indy. [But] my agent said, ‘You don’t want to go there, there’s nothing there anymore!’”⁶ What Wooten’s agent referred to was the apparent lack of exciting music happening in Indianapolis during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The legacy of the Avenue was still ingrained in the minds of agents, musicians and club-goers, and anything less was deemed unsatisfactory. Since the Avenue was dying, it was assumed by most that Indianapolis’ music scene was dying along with it, and the moniker “Naptown” seemed quite appropriate in describing nightlife in the Circle City.

Despite the strong cultural legacy of the Indiana Avenue entertainment district, it was not exempt from the many tensions that tore at the seams of the black community during the late sixties and early seventies. The construction of I-65 and IUPUI had pushed a large portion of the neighborhood’s black population to areas north of 30th Street. As a result, black-owned businesses either left the area or closed up and there was little or no new money coming in. By the early seventies, the neighborhood had become one of the worst slums in town. Drug use and violence also changed the face of the Avenue, driving people away from local businesses and keeping patrons out of the nightclubs. White residents regularly patronized Avenue jazz clubs, but as violence and anti-white sentiments grew, their presence greatly decreased.⁷ Black residents who had

⁶ Interview, Eothen Alapatt with Billy Wooten, vibist and Indianapolis musician, Summer, 2001, online transcription, Stones Throw Records, <http://www.stonesthrow.com>. Accessed March 11, 2002.

⁷ Interview, author with Jimmy Guilford, musician and club owner, March 22, 2002.

historically visited the Blue Eagle, the Place to Play, and the Flame now patronized the 20 Grand, the Demonstrators Club, the Hub-Bub and other near North side clubs. For the most part, club goers had regional tastes, preferring not to travel across town on a Friday or Saturday night and choosing instead to stay close to home. The growing popularity of nightclubs north of 30th Street along with the many tensions that affected the Indiana Avenue community further deteriorated the nightclub scene along the Avenue and led to the closing of many nightclubs that once prospered.

Although the Indiana Avenue nightclub scene declined steadily throughout the late sixties and early seventies, the clubs functioned as cultural glue for as long as possible. For years, Indiana Avenue was *the* place for live jazz, soul, and rhythm and blues, yet as the neighborhood degraded and residents moved out nightclubs rarely had large audiences. Once upon a time, residents and club patrons took great pride in the Avenue and its rich musical legacy yet eventually, the deteriorating status of the neighborhood received more attention than the clubs or the musicians. In response, club owners became pretty creative in their programming hoping to maintain that connection between themselves and the declining neighborhood community. The black community and the nightclub scene were integrated; when the Avenue declined, so did the nightclub scene. The clubs and their acts reflected and supported the community in its moderation but also in its location.

Despite the inevitability of the decline of Indiana Avenue and its nightclub scene, the staff at the Indianapolis Recorder played an essential role in the attempted preservation of the community and the music scene. For decades, the Recorder was the best source to find out what was happening at Indiana Avenue nightclubs. Most clubs

had advertisements printed and until 1970, when advertisements for movie houses and syndicated music columns replaced articles on the local scene, the Recorder published a column called “Entertainment World” that listed the events and bands scheduled to take place at local nightclubs. This column accompanied the many advertisements in the Recorder and both were essential in bringing business to the nightclubs. Working in concert with the Recorder’s staff, club owners maintained programming that was suited to the large middle class and moderate black readership sought by the paper. Club owners knew the coverage and respect the Recorder had in the black community and booking acts deemed inappropriate or too militant by the paper’s conservative staff could have an ill effect on their business. If respected columnists Bob Womack, Sr. or The Saint did not like a certain act or disagreed with their politics, they would have assuredly written so in the Recorder and could have adversely affected nightclub attendance. Prior to 1970 or 1971, if an Indiana Avenue nightclub held a political rally or featured an act like the Lumpen or the Last Poets, the Recorder would not have supported it. We have seen how little coverage radical politics received in the Recorder, and radical music or club programming would have received similar treatment.

The “Entertainment World” column not only proved essential in letting the public know about the musical acts at each nightclub, but also about the many novelty or supporting acts as well. For the clubs on Indiana Avenue, music acts were predominantly local. The Moonlighters regularly played at the Blue Eagle, while Billy Ball and the Upsetters oftentimes alternated between the Place to Play and the Flame, located just south of the Avenue at 252 Blake Street. Al’s British Lounge regularly featured the jazz stylings owner Al Coleman’s group, the Three Souls. When at these shows, audiences

could expect to see much more than just a band. Novelty acts, from comedians and dancers to exotic dancers and snake charmers, were an important part of the nightclub scene. There was a time in the Avenue's history when people came solely for the music, but now club owners had to offer more to draw a crowd and give them their money's worth. In some cases, it appeared that the emphasis was more on the show than on the talent of the musicians. In his column for the Recorder, Bob Womack Sr., remarked, "Less blow and more showmanship on the part of combos, bands and entertainers seems to move the public in a big way these days. The low attendances of clubs, lounges, taverns and many folding theatres have been laid to the poorness of current attractions. . . . [Take] advantage of the latest trend by obtaining attractions with the most showmanship."⁸ What Womack did not take into account was the declining status of the Avenue, how the area had become dilapidated and how the crowds stayed away from the clubs for their own safety. No amount of showmanship would make up for the loss of a consumer base in the Avenue district.

Perhaps the largest draw for these clubs were female singers, exotic dancers, strippers, go-go dancers and a snake handler who helped bring in the male audience. In the late 1960s, women artists such as Johnnie Mae Oliver and Dottie Clark frequented Indiana Avenue clubs. For the most part, women served as secondary or opening performers to the night's main musical act. Most clubs featured a floorshow consisting of a main band, an opening act or vocalist, an emcee, and a scantily clad dancer. The most prominent of these performers was the nationally known stripper, Lottie the Body. Lottie, described several times as the "girl with the shapely gams and what-have-you," performed regularly at the Carousel Lounge on North Meridian Street as an

⁸ Recorder, "Believe Me When I Tell You" column by Bob Womack, Sr., July 8, 1967.

accompaniment to former Ray Charles band member Dottie Clark.⁹ Another mainstay along the Avenue was Miss Tangi Dupree, the “Snake Goddess of the Nile,” who featured a fifteen-foot long snake in her performance. Dupree was a member of the Powder Puff Revue that played at The Flame during 1968. Supposedly a “South American” production, the revue featured Dupree the Snake Goddess, jazz vocalist Vivian Angelique, comedian Veronica Lake and sex kitten Brenda McNair. The Powder Puff Revue was the only all female show advertised in the Recorder during these years. These ads, along with those for Lottie the Body, are some of the first advertisements to make overt references to women and sex, a practice that became more common in the 1970s.¹⁰

Although Indiana Avenue nightclubs had historically featured novelty acts that accompanied the main musical acts of the night, the late sixties and early seventies provided a slightly different club environment. In the 1930s, a floorshow was common in many nightclubs but received minimal billing in the Recorder advertisement.¹¹ Recorder advertisements from the sixties and seventies still placed the musicians’ names at the forefront yet they were followed by a detailed rundown of the night’s other entertainments. For example, an advertisement for the Blue Eagle not only listed the Moonlighters and their vocalist Gene Kelly, but also the names of the dancers, the emcee,

⁹ Recorder, “Lottie the Body at Carousel May 1; New Singer at Queen Clubs,” April 29, 1967; “Local Nite Spots Booking Top Entertainment,” May 20, 1967; “Entertainment World” column, June 3, 1967; “Entertainment World” column, October 21, 1967.

¹⁰ Recorder, “Visit Your Favorite Tavern During National Tavern Month for Fun Galore,” May 18, 1968; “Entertainment World” column, June 29, 1968.

¹¹ Amy Wilson, “The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue: Indianapolis’ African-American Jazz Scene, 1933-1950,” (M.A. thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1997), 44, 53, 57, 74.

the comedian, or whomever else might be involved in the night's performance.¹²

Although music was still the main draw, club owners wanted to appeal to patrons who might not necessarily like the musical act so much, but really liked the comedian or the dancers.

Club owners also seized the opportunities provided by the latest dance crazes that swept the country. In the early 1960s, when club attendance was practically non-existent, Chubby Checker came along with "The Twist" and people flocked to their local clubs to dance. Jimmy Guilford believed that "The Twist" single-handedly rejuvenated the club scene, boosting turnout at existing clubs and helping open new ones as well.¹³ By the late 60s, dancing took on an even greater importance. Through creativity and large-scale participation, black dances became highly politicized. Dancing, along with soul music, became a hallmark of black identity and solidarity and an affirmation of the strength and beauty of black culture. As the Civil Rights Movement progressed, the Miracles coined the phrase "dance to keep from crying," indicative of the struggles faced by the black community.¹⁴ In Indianapolis, with poverty on the rise and their historic home area starting to crumble, it is no wonder why African Americans flocked to the dance clubs. It was a release, a chance to get out, get down, and feel good for a change. Dancing contests were common, and prizes were given to whomever could do the "Mashed Potato" or "Twist" the best. Local musicians such as the Highlighters, Big Daddy Graham, and Billy Ball seized the opportunity, writing and recording songs for specific

¹² Recorder, advertisement for the Blue Eagle Lounge, January 27, 1968.

¹³ Interview, author with Jimmy Guilford, March 22, 2002. As late as 1967, nearly five years after Chubby Checker recorded "The Twist," the J&J Lounge hosted a "Twist Contest" presented by the Indianapolis-based Radio Corporation of America (RCA). Recorder, "Entertainment World" column, October 21, 1967.

¹⁴ Brian Ward, Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 210-212.

dances, such as the “Popcorn,” the “Four Corners,” the “Tighten Up,” and the creation of Indianapolis’ own Rhythm Machine, an anti-drug dance called “The Kick.”¹⁵

The declining significance of the Indiana Avenue entertainment district also became apparent in the activities of local civic and social organizations. The black community no longer saw the Avenue as the lifeblood of the local entertainment scene and thus took their community activities and gatherings elsewhere. For decades, both young and old African Americans used the Avenue, its clubs, and its restaurants as meeting places for social clubs and civic organizations. However, by the late sixties, many groups including the Defiants, the Demonstrators, the Soulfonics, and others found newer and nicer meeting places. Although Indiana Avenue nightclubs had in the past hosted these groups, their facilities no longer were suitable for events and fundraisers. The Demonstrators built their own club at 2317 Central Avenue, while other groups utilized the Hub-Bub, the 20 Grand, and Neto’s Lounge for meeting places.¹⁶ Not only did this move take customers and business away from Avenue nightspots, it also reduced the cultural and civic significance of the area as well. When combined with the many tensions and problems apparent on the Avenue many patrons avoided the area altogether.

As more respectable patrons avoided the nightclubs along the Avenue, a much different clientele became more common. The status and attitudes of the patrons changed

¹⁵ Big Daddy Graham, “Tightening Your Popcorn,” C.A.M. Association 160, 1969; Billy Ball and the Upsetters featuring Roosevelt Matthews, “Tighten Up Tighter,” King 6173, 1968; Billy Ball and the Upsetters, “Carmel Corn,” Lamp, 1969; Billy Ball and the Upsetters, “Sissy Walk” and “Popcorn ’69,” Apollo 90833, 1969; The Highlighters, “Poppin’ Popcorn,” Three Diamonds 001, 1969; The Highlighters, “Funky 16 Corners,” Three Diamonds 002, 1969; The Rhythm Machine, “The Kick,” Lulu 9706, 1970.

¹⁶ Not only did social clubs move events to the nicer and newer nightclubs north of 30th Street, but larger halls such as the Northside Armory and the Knights of Columbus Hall also played host to several events as well. Recorder, advertisement for the Defiants Club Ball, May 16, 1968; Recorder, advertisement for the Miss Esquire Dance, May 16, 1971.

greatly as well. During the thirties and forties, most club goers dressed nicely and went to the clubs for the music; by the late sixties, many Avenue club patrons simply stumbled in off the street more intent on finding a stiff drink than a night of good entertainment.¹⁷ Indiana Avenue clubs became more rowdy. Whereas before bouncers kept drunk and disorderly patrons out of the club, they now let them in to collect the cover and their bar tab to help fill the coffers. Add these changes to the population shift that took many blacks north of 30th Street and it explains why Indiana Avenue club attendance dwindled significantly in the late sixties and early seventies. Most club-goers went to nightclubs that were close to home; those who lived on the near west side frequented establishments along the Avenue, while those who lived north of 30th Street now went to clubs in that neighborhood.

Despite the loss of and change in the audience attending Indiana Avenue nightclubs, club owners refused to appeal to a small, yet growing group of radicals within the black community. Oftentimes, the Black Radical Action Project (BRAP) or other militant groups used Indiana Avenue nightclubs to recruit disgruntled young black males into their ranks. Their attempts were usually for naught as the group saw little improvement in its enrollment despite widespread efforts. Perhaps Indiana Avenue club owners would seize upon the trend and welcome radicals into their clubs for rallies or radical jazz, soul, or funk music. Yet this was not the case, as catering to a limited number of radicals would not increase money coming into the club; there were just not enough militants in Indianapolis for that to be financially beneficial. Furthermore, most club owners were older, well respected blacks who shunned the militant ideologies of the Black Panthers or the BRAP. They felt that adding these elements to an already troubled

¹⁷ Interview, author with John Humphrey, percussionist, December 16, 2002.

community would spell disaster. For the most part, club owners on the Avenue stayed with the tried-and-true programming that featured a main soul or jazz act along with an opening act, dancers, and an emcee. Rarely, if at all, did politics enter the equation. Instead, club owners sought to strengthen the black community not with calls to action but with popular activities and music that appealed to wide variety of patrons.

With only a few minor exceptions, clubs along the Avenue saw their highest attendance before 1970. After 1970, the number of advertisements in the Recorder dropped significantly, with the entertainment page dominated by ads for drive-in theaters, adult film theaters and clubs outside the Indiana Avenue area. Usually, the only music advertised in the paper was that of national artists coming into town for a big show at the State Fairgrounds, Bush Stadium, the Convention Center, or in later years, Market Square Arena. Although the clubs stayed open and still played host to local acts, their popularity waned significantly. In 1974, Big Daddy Graham and two fellow investors attempted to revitalize the music scene along the Avenue by re-opening the “Magnificent New Blue Eagle Lounge,” yet the venture soon failed.¹⁸ Shortly thereafter, the Down Beat Lounge and the Place to Play also closed their doors forever. The clubs on the “Main Stem” could no longer compete with larger, nicer and more popular clubs in other parts of the city.

When certain neighborhoods, restaurants, and nightclubs were off limits to African Americans during the era of de facto segregation, the Avenue thrived since it was the only viable entertainment option for the black community. As the effects of segregation faded away, more options throughout the city became available for thrill-

¹⁸ Recorder, advertisement for The Magnificent New Blue Eagle Lounge, September 28, 1974.

seeking African-Americans. However, by the early seventies, going out to nightclubs had become a neighborhood activity in the sense that rarely did people drive across town to see a band or visit a nightclub. Thus, when new nightclubs like the Magnificent New Blue Eagle or Billy Mac's Lounge opened up along Indiana Avenue in 1973, they rarely stayed in business more than a year simply because there was not the audience in the Indiana Avenue area to support such ventures. Competition was great and the club owners with the most money had the best bands, the best variety acts, and the nicest clubs. Clubs along the Avenue such as the Blue Eagle, the Place to Play, and the Flame had had the same owners since the 1950s, and in some cases even earlier. The nightclub was their life and they put all the money back into it they could, yet with dwindling numbers coming through the doors, the quality of the surroundings began to deteriorate. Patrons also went where they felt comfortable, and by 1970, the Indiana Avenue area had become crime and drug infested which kept away prospective clientele.

Although most Indiana Avenue nightclubs were not involved with promoting or hosting the activities or fundraisers of local social clubs, they were still an important part of the local black music scene. The number and status of patrons dwindled, yet the nightclubs still served as cultural glue for the many African Americans who still resided in the Indiana Avenue neighborhood. They served this role for as long as they could, yet were not able to draw in patrons and put on the kind shows they once were able to. Indiana Avenue clubs reflected and supported an older, more intimate black community that declined along with the neighborhood itself. Indiana Avenue nightclubs maintained their significance because they brought together what was left of the largest and strongest black community in Indianapolis. Across town at places like the 20 Grand, the 19th

Hole, and the Demonstrators Club, something very exciting was happening. Although nightclubs in both districts featured similar music, it was the new clubs north of 30th Street that catered to the new black residents of this area. These clubs culturally and socially supported the rising black community there, became more popular, and drew large audiences several nights a week to hear local and national soul and funk artists.

The Birth of a New Entertainment District

When the neighborhoods north of 30th Street opened up to the black population in the mid-sixties, businesses that catered to the black community soon followed. Grocery stores, restaurants, and Laundromats opened up to serve this new population, as did several nightclubs. The newer nightclubs that sprouted up north of 30th Street reflected and supported the growing black community taking shape there and were slightly different than their counterparts located on Indiana Avenue. The owners of the Demonstrators Club, the 20 Grand Ballroom, and the 19th Hole put a lot of money into building new structures or refurbishing existing buildings and helped create a new and exciting setting for live music and dancing. While Indiana Avenue clubs were not able to attract big name national artists, these new clubs had the facilities and money to do just that. These clubs also became the popular spots for many local bands, many of whom never returned to the Avenue once they got a steady job at a place like the 20 Grand or the Hub-Bub. The most important aspect of this new nightclub district was its role in becoming the gathering place for the many local social clubs. Entrenched in the community, these social clubs organized fundraisers for worthy causes, held dance contests, and played an instrumental role in bringing the black community together. The

birth of a new nightclub district in Indianapolis was a key component in diffusing the many tensions present in the black community and providing a platform to express moderate political beliefs.

The nightclub scenes in Chicago, New York, and Oakland featured political rallies and fundraisers for radical causes, but Indianapolis' club owners shied away from this practice. In Los Angeles and Oakland, the Black Panthers oftentimes held rallies in nightclubs featuring the Lumpen and singer Elaine Brown. They put the party's ideology into musical form, hoping to reach the black masses.¹⁹ Local bands in these cities also aligned themselves with the Black Panthers or other militant groups, yet this was unheard of in Indianapolis, at least in the soul and funk scene. The Black Radical Action Project fully embraced the politics of radical or avant-garde jazz and featured these acts at their Jazz Workers nightclub, but their tenets of Black Power did not mix with the soul music favored by Indianapolis' young black masses. There was no clear alignment between local soul and funk artists and these radical groups, and their live performances reflected the moderate political views of the majority of Indianapolis African-American community.

During the late sixties and early seventies, nightclubs and politics were inextricably linked, as seen through the efforts of Black Radical Action Project and other involved social clubs. The BRAP attempted to use the nightclub scene a to persuade young male patrons to join their ranks. They recruited members at the 19th Hole, the Hub-Bub, and at the Barrington Lounge on the south side, yet, their numbers showed

¹⁹ Ward, *Just My Soul Responding*, 413-16.

little improvement.²⁰ Nevertheless, the fact that the BRAP went into the clubs showed that a level of heightened political conscious and community awareness was present in the city's nightclubs. Although many young African Americans did not want to be part of a group like the BRAP or the Black Panthers, they were eager to join other social organizations. These groups, although moderate, were still politically active. They were an important part of the community and played a role in the general improvement of life inside the black community. Groups such as the Demonstrators, the Defiants, and the Soulfonics held events or fundraisers at Indianapolis nightclubs, embedding themselves and the clubs as supporters and promoters of the local black community.

Although some clubs shied away from a political allegiance, several clubs, including the massive 20 Grand Ballroom, hosted benefits for social programs like Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) Operation Breadbasket.²¹ Headed by Dr. Andrew Brown, the Indianapolis chapter of Operation Breadbasket helped give food and money to needy families in the community, and several benefits were held in local nightclubs. Reverend Jesse Jackson was in charge of Operation Breadbasket at the national level and he became close to several musicians. In fact, Jackson recited the opening to Julian "Cannonball" Adderley's 1969 album, Country Preacher, which was recorded at an SCLC Operation Breadbasket benefit in Chicago in early 1969. Later, Jackson aligned himself with Stax Records out of Memphis and participated in the Wattstax Festival, held in Los Angeles in 1972. The SCLC felt that reaching out to

²⁰ Interview, author with Representative William Crawford, December 20, 2002. Following the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Crawford joined the Black Radical Action Project and was a member for several years.

²¹ Please see Appendix B, Image 11.

sympathetic music fans might help increase donations to the cause. The Indianapolis chapter hoped that the audience at the 20 Grand would follow through as well.²²

Although community involvement and the desire to raise funds for worthy causes helped bring conscientious patrons into the nightclubs, music was still the main draw. The onset of the 1970s ushered in a new era of music featured in larger and newer clubs located throughout the city. During the 1930s and '40s, when the Avenue was the center of Indianapolis' music scene, nightclubs existed in other areas as well. Nightclubs such as the Club Savoy, the Sunset Tavern and Izsak's Grand Terrace Café were located on the east side in the Martindale area, while the north side had the Blue Goose Tavern and the Parisien Gardens along Northwestern Avenue.²³ Although these clubs were popular in their prime, the 1970s was the first decade that clubs outside of the Avenue reached a higher level of prominence and offered bigger and better events than anything the Avenue provided.

Local bands were the main form of entertainment at Indianapolis nightclubs, but nationally known soul and funk artists passed through Indianapolis as well. During the thirties and forties nearly every major jazz artist passed through Indianapolis, and during the late sixties and early seventies most major soul and funk artists played local nightclubs, the Convention Center, the State Fair Coliseum, and Bush Stadium. Prominent national acts like Booker T. and the MGs, Solomon Burke, and Al Green graced the stages at the 20 Grand and Demonstrators clubs, while James Brown and

²² Recorder, advertisement for the 20 Grand Ballroom, July 17, 1971.

²³ Wilson, "The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue," 143.

Aretha Franklin played to thousands of people in larger venues.²⁴ Prior to 1968, many national artists avoided Indianapolis because there were few adequate venues that could house their performances. However, with the opening of several large clubs, national artists began to return and so did the crowds.

One of the first clubs to open up outside of Indiana Avenue was the 19th Hole located at 2901 Harding Street. The 19th Hole was the near north side's hub for soul jazz, and vibist Billy Wooten was the featured act. Wooten first came to Indianapolis in 1968, playing regularly at the Hub-Bub Lounge on West 34th Street, sometimes for as long as a month. During this time, Wooten met Janie Robinson, who purchased Wooten's contract from the owner of the Hub-Bub. After spending nearly a year in Indianapolis, Wooten left to record two albums with jazz guitar legend Grant Green. In 1971, Wooten left the group over contractual issues. Not having anywhere to go, Wooten turned to what he had left behind: the vibrant Indianapolis club scene. After placing a desperate call to Janie Robinson, owner of the 19th Hole, Wooten returned to Indianapolis and formed The Wooden Glass. In an interview with Eothen Alapatt, Wooten described how Robinson welcomed him back with open arms:

[After leaving Grant Green] The guys looked at me and I said, "The only thing I know is the lady I left in Indy." So I called her at the 19th Hole, and she said, "PLEASE come back!" She welcomed us back, she never quibbled about money or anything. She had a house and they treated us – you know, how they used to bring the musicians in the 11th, 12th century – we were paid, they furnished a good house. Coming out of the East coast, I didn't know what a house was about! I was always an apartment man. She initially furnished us with automobiles, too. I don't want to sound

²⁴ Indianapolis Recorder, advertisement for Solomon Burke at the Demonstrators Club, October 9, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for Al Green at the Demonstrators Club, November 13, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for Booker T. and the MGs at the Riverside Ballroom, October 7, 1967.

like I'm bragging, but the club was packed six nights a week. And two matinees!²⁵

As one of the newer and nicer nightclubs in the new entertainment district, the 19th Hole often catered to large crowds. Had Wooten played on the Avenue at the Place to Play or the Blue Eagle, the crowds and his paycheck would have been smaller. Most of the musicians who regularly played the Avenue were Indianapolis residents and did not require lodging. Indiana Avenue nightclubs did not have the budgets of their near north side counterparts and could not afford to hire traveling musicians for extended periods of time.

Billy Wooten described the scene at the 19th Hole as a “utopian environment,” with black and white musicians coming from places as distant as Cincinnati to play on a Friday or Saturday matinee.²⁶ This is the only instance in which a musician or an advertisement has mentioned white musicians performing at a club in a black area of Indianapolis. However, since Wooten played mainly soul jazz, interplay with a white musician would have been more likely than if he were a funk artist. A racially mixed band seems remarkable since both Jimmy Guilford and musician Al Young observed that white musicians playing in black clubs was extremely rare especially during the early seventies.²⁷ Had Indianapolis been a more radical community, a white musician would have either been laughed at or chased off the stage.²⁸

²⁵ Interview, Alapatt with Billy Wooten, Summer 2001.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Interview, author with Jimmy Guilford, March 22, 2002; Interview, author with Al Young, April 9, 2002.

²⁸ Beginning in the mid-1960s, resentment grew towards white artists who copied black styles. As soul and funk grew in popularity, African Americans began to take possession of and pride in their music, despite the presence of white musicians on many Stax and Atlantic soul sides. They became increasingly resentful when artists like Mitch Ryder and Rare Earth covered Motown hits or soul classics. Many blacks felt that white artists had exploited black music long

One of the many differences between Indiana Avenue clubs and those elsewhere was the number of prominent national artists who frequented these large new nightclubs. At the forefront of these establishments was the 20 Grand Show Lounge on West 34th Street. A former bowling alley, the 20 Grand was one of the largest nightclubs in town and featured popular national acts such as Funkadelic, King Floyd, Maceo Parker and Rufus Thomas.²⁹ The 20 Grand also featured special attractions nearly every night of the week, such as ladies night and amateur talent shows. Admission prices were high, ranging anywhere from three to six dollars depending on the act. To assuage the burden of this high cover charge, the club oftentimes held dance contests that paid as much as \$100 to the winner. From advertisements in the Recorder, it appears the 20 Grand focused on national entertainment, whether it was a one-off date or a weeklong engagement. The club did present some local entertainment on its own, but local bands mainly played when the club hosted a matinee or gathering put on by a local social club. The Demonstrators Club on Central Avenue also brought in nationally known acts such as Solomon Burke, Eddie Harris and Al Green in the early seventies.³⁰ These clubs were not only well financed but also popular enough as gathering places that they could support national acts on a regular basis.

enough, beginning in the mid-1950s with Pat Boone's cover of Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" and the many rhythm and blues covers done by Elvis Presley. As the social and political importance of soul and funk music increased, a white musician's rendition of songs by James Brown, Marvin Gaye, or Curtis Mayfield became sacrilege.

²⁹ Recorder, advertisement for Rufus Thomas at the 20 Grand Ballroom, February 7, 1970; Recorder, advertisement for Maceo Parker and all the King's Men, April 10, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for Parliament Funkadelic at the 20 Grand Ballroom, July 31, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for King Floyd at the 20 Grand Ballroom, November 6, 1971.

³⁰ Recorder, advertisement for Eddie Harris at the Demonstrators Club, May 22, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for Solomon Burke at the Demonstrators Club, October 9, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for Al Green at the Demonstrators Club, November 13, 1971.

Despite the many concerts put on by nationally known artists, the Demonstrators Club was best known as host to the many gatherings for Indianapolis' African-American social clubs. In fact, the Demonstrators Club was a social club unto itself, holding meetings at the club while also featuring live music, an open bar and the "Miss Demonstrators" beauty pageant. Although social clubs were a longstanding tradition in the city, they were traditionally for older couples or young debutantes. Clubs such as the Penguins, the Soul Survivors and social sororities frequently posted meeting reviews and photos on the society page of the Recorder. Other clubs such as the Soul Babes Social and Charity Club and the Blackinizers were heavily involved in charitable activities, putting on matinees during the holiday season to raise money or presenting Santa Claus at a neighborhood community center.³¹ The early 1970s saw a dramatic increase in club participation by both young black men and women.

Many of these social clubs became well known throughout the city for the shows and matinees they sponsored in local nightclubs. Nightclubs functioned as significant gathering places for African Americans in Indianapolis, not only as social centers but also as venues for charity events and fundraisers. The matinee was a highly popular enterprise in Indianapolis, and the city was deemed a "matinee, club-type city" in an advertisement for a local social club, The Men.³² Matinees were a weekly event in the city, with different clubs hosting whenever funds were available, or at times joining forces to host a larger, more extravagant affair. Many clubs were exclusively for men or women, so a combination affair put on by a men's club and women's club was quite

³¹ Recorder, photo caption of the Blackinizer's Christmas program at the Haughville Community Center, December 15, 1973.

³² Recorder, advertisement for matinee put on by The Men, January 12, 1974.

common.³³ Local entertainment, such as the Incredible Pushers Show Band and Funk Inc. provided the soundtrack for these affairs, most of which were held on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Because these affairs were not only social events but also club fundraisers, admission was charged at the door, and usually ranged anywhere from two to four dollars, some of which was returned as door prizes or to contest winners.

While many social club events and contests were quite tame, the attitudes and preferences of events organizers and audiences began to change as the seventies wore on. “Twist” or “Mashed Potato” contests no longer fit the bill; audiences now preferred “Hot Pants” contests or wine drinking competitions instead of the old standards. Not only event organizers, but also nightclub owners, placed an emphasis on contests that featured women dancing or stripping for both prizes and the enjoyment of male patrons. As these activities increased, they reflected a growing national trend in African-American entertainment. Soul and funk music and films began to emphasize the black male, his machismo, and his efforts to get ahead in the world by any means necessary, usually at the expense of black women. As these films and music became popular in Indianapolis, nightclub programming began to reflect their growing popularity, which further supported a young black community looking for such entertainment.

³³ Recorder, “Soulfonics and Slick Sisters Unite,” May 8, 1971. Recorder, photo caption for the “Young, Gifted and Black Dance” at the Knights of Columbus Hall, August 10, 1974. The Black Pearls were the organizers of this event, which featured music by the Care Package. The Men, The Master, the Soulful Zodiacs, The Defiants Club and the Zodiac Form also contributed to this function. Recorder, photo caption for the 3rd Annual Aggregation of Social Clubs at Eagle Creek Park, July 26, 1975. The Aggregation was a meeting of the Kameos, High Chaparrals, the People’s Choice and the Black Pipers.

The Rise of Blaxploitation and Disco

By 1973-74, the Indianapolis nightclub had begun to decline. Many of the long-time staples on the local music scene – The Highlighters, The Rhythm Machine, and The Moonlighters – had either left town or broken up. New bands, such as the Soul Perfection Show Band, the Incredible Pushers Funk Revival, and others, took their place but the scene had changed. Many club goers began to lose interest in the nightclub scene and looked elsewhere for entertainment. Instead of live music, many African Americans turned to movies and found a group of larger-than-life characters who did things beyond their wildest dreams. These characters – John Shaft, Youngblood Priest, Dolemite, and Black Caesar – had power, money, women, and the ability to challenge the white establishment, and they were *black*.

These Blaxploitation movies were geared toward a cynical African-American audience looking for heroes. Blacks suffered through the failure of the Great Society, the Vietnam War, and growing unrest in their urban communities. They felt Civil Rights and Black Power had failed them, leaving them with the crumbled remains of their black pride and the hope they once had for a better tomorrow. Hollywood seized upon this growing malaise, created a line of black superheroes, and gave movie-going blacks something to cheer about. The characters made blacks feel powerful, like there was someone somewhere looking out for their best interests. Like soul musicians had done earlier, these fictional black characters became the new heroes of the black culture. However, instead of providing filmgoers with a positive, uplifting message, these films spoke to the advantages of cutting corners, committing crimes, objectifying women, and eliminating anyone who got in their way.

The Blaxploitation boom changed the face of black Indianapolis as hairstyles, clothing, music, and attitudes all became a reflection of the genre. Nearly overnight the Recorder was full of advertisements for this brand of movie. The values, styles and themes of the movies worked their way into Indianapolis' nightclub scene as well, where the focus was not just on the music but also the events, dances and contests that served to increase black pride, and black machismo. Many black men sought out clubs that promoted a vision of masculinity that excluded and objectified women through dance contests and beauty pageants. Sex had always been a part of the Indianapolis nightclub scene, so much in fact that guitarist Clint Jones recalled that people "...didn't come to the clubs for the music. I think they came to get laid!"³⁴ However, by the early seventies club programming and advertising became geared more explicitly towards the sexual enjoyment of Indianapolis' black male population. The Indianapolis music and nightclub scene once held together the entire black community, yet by the early seventies, they began to focus on the desires of Indianapolis' black men.

Despite the mass appeal and acceptance of the Blaxploitation genre by African-American audiences, there were consequences of these entertainments that consistently stressed the pride and power of African-American men. In Indianapolis, these consequences became evident in advertisements for clubs that featured graphic representations of the female anatomy. Clubs featured "loose booty" and "braless dance contests" on a weekly basis.³⁵ Advertisements encouraged men to come to the club and check out the "foxes" for their viewing pleasure, reducing these women to mere objects. Club programming became geared towards a largely male audience and was a reflection

³⁴ Interview, author with Clint Jones, December 16, 2002.

³⁵ See Appendix B, Figure 11 and Figure 13.

of the changing face of the local black community. Boosting the egos of black men was of the utmost importance even if it happened at the expense of black women. By the early seventies, the promises of Civil Rights and Black Power had fallen short and many black men felt cheated or angry that they were unable to find their rightful seat at the table as jobs and opportunities dried up. In turn, many black men felt it necessary to put down black women. They became distrustful of women, and wanted to solidify their own superiority, which they did through degrading women's roles and objectifying their bodies.³⁶

Brian Ward, like William Van Deburg, sees the increased chauvinism of soul music during the 1970s as a result of an increasingly intense, male-driven black pride that found its way into mainstream black culture and black life. Black culture, soul included, began to take on an air of vicious chauvinism and sexism beginning as early 1969 or 1970. James Brown, once the paean of sensitive and romantic soul, recorded songs driven by sexual potency and black male ego. The music that once brought a message of hope and promise deteriorated into raps about how women should please and be subservient to men.³⁷ "It's A New Day," recorded by Brown in 1969, was in essence a list of instructions for a woman to follow to keep her man satisfied. She was told to "never get too confident" and "take care of business" when the black man's sexual needs demanded service.³⁸ This view of black women was common in advertisements for Indianapolis nightclubs. Even the Recorder, a well-respected middle class newspaper,

³⁶ Please see David Caute, Sixty-Eight (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988); Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Michele Wallace, Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (New York: Dial Press, 1978). See also Ward, Just My Soul Responding, n. 49, 372.

³⁷ Ward, Just My Soul Responding, 373.

³⁸ James Brown, "It's A New Day," King K6292, 1969.

consistently referred to women as “sexy,” “attractive” or “foxy,” indicating that the impact of intense, male-oriented black pride was seen not only at a mainstream, national level.³⁹

One of the dominant images from this era was “the mack,” which made its way into the black community in Indianapolis. An article about the opening of the blaxploitation classic The Mack described a mack as a “highly successful street pimp who attracts the sexiest girls, rides in the biggest cars, wears the best clothes and says ‘I’m in control.’”⁴⁰ During the 1970s, music and movies glorified this image to the extreme, portraying the mack as a black superhero. At the center of the mack’s fictional world were violence, virulent misogyny, and crime. He was in control of his own fate and did not let “The Man” bring him down. The mack took what he wanted when he wanted and did not let anyone get in the way of his success.⁴¹ This image proved appealing at a time when Civil Rights and Black Power seemed to have stalled out.

In Indianapolis, blaxploitation movies played throughout the city. The Walker Theatre, Tibbs Drive-in and other theaters in black neighborhoods featured movies such as Superfly, Dolemite, The Mack and Black Caesar, all of which starred strong, powerful and womanizing black men in the leading role. The popularity of this phenomenon also influenced Indianapolis’ nightclub scene. Beginning in 1971, the Recorder featured more advertisements for movie houses than it did for nightclubs and musicians. By 1973, the paper regularly featured advertisements for nightclubs using the image or the language of

³⁹ Recorder, advertisement for the British Lounge, February 6, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for the Honeydrinker Lounge, March 20, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for the 20 Grand Ballroom, August 7, 1971; Recorder, advertisement for the Inn Crowd Lounge, June 8, 1974.

⁴⁰ Recorder, “The Mack Set to Open,” May 5, 1973.

⁴¹ See Van Deburg, Black Camelot, 127-196.

the mack. Whereas nightclubs once sought to disassociate themselves from suspicious characters to keep customers safe, they now seized the opportunity provided by mass culture and geared their advertising towards the glorification of the mack, the gangster and the ghetto. At the forefront of this change was the Inn Crowd Lounge at 1435 Commerce, the former home of Jimmy Guilford's Soul City club. In its advertising, the Inn Crowd featured slogans like "Doin' it to the macks" and proclaimed that the club was in the heart of the "ghetto." This was an attempt at forming in-group identity by bringing back the pride in being part of a black "ghetto."⁴² Nightclub programming was geared towards a predominantly male audience in response to mass culture's glorification of the strong black male. Clubs now featured "Sexy Mama," "Hot Pants," and X-rated "Loose Body" contests at their matinees in lieu of traditional dance and amateur talent contests. On certain nights, clubs regularly lowered drink prices and cover charges for women, hoping to bring a large female contingent. Social clubs got into the act by sponsoring such events as the "Mack of the Year Contest" and the "Gangsters Ball," which was held at the ISTA Building downtown.⁴³

Despite its popularity among club-goers, the image of the mack was highly criticized by the Recorder staff. The connotation of the mack and the baggage it carried was not suitable to many in the black community. By 1974, two new entertainment columns were featured on semi-regular basis in the Recorder. "Nightlife with O.J." and "Party People" by Eunice McLayea discussed goings-on at clubs and highlighted photographs of club interiors. Of the two, "Party People" was printed more often and contained a sometimes-critical view of Indianapolis nightlife. McLayea was especially

⁴² Recorder, advertisement for the Inn Crowd Lounge, October 26, 1974.

⁴³ Recorder, photo caption for the "Mack of the Year" contest presented by the Soul Sapphires, August 28, 1973; Recorder, advertisement for the Gangster's Ball, April 21, 1973.

disparaging towards the idea of the mack. In November 1974, Cousin's Lounge at 654 Fairfield Avenue opened and McLayea was there to cover it, noting the club's carefree and mellow atmosphere and that there were no "superflies, romeos or Casanovas" present to interrupt the good times.⁴⁴ Similar articles, including a 1973 article by The Saint that criticized the "intelligentsia" of the black community for wearing "Superfly garments," were common during 1974 and later years.⁴⁵ Just as the Recorder had criticized the Afro in 1968, the paper again was criticizing the fashion and style of Indianapolis' young African-American community. The notion of the mack ultimately created problems for nightclubs, bringing in crooked characters and shady dealings that drove away the backbone of their patronage. By 1974, club owners and newspaper columnists like McLayea attempted to bring back patrons who feared going out because of the suspicious characters that clubs catered to.⁴⁶

Despite the rejuvenation efforts of Eunice McLayea and other staff at the Recorder, the death knell had sounded for the Indianapolis nightclub scene by 1974. The onset of the Blaxploitation culture and departure of several prominent black musicians greatly changed the scene. Nightclubs began to close; the Avenue became deserted, more so than it was in 1970. By 1974, most of the clubs on the north side had also closed. About this same time, disco music began to sweep the country. When disco became popular in Indianapolis, it was the straw that broke the camel's back, ending the era of

⁴⁴ Recorder, "Party People" column by Eunice McLayea, November 9, 1974.

⁴⁵ Recorder, "The Avenoo" column by The Saint, May 5, 1973.

⁴⁶ Recorder, "Party People" column by Eunice McLayea, August 17, 1974. In this column, McLayea describes Robby's Lounge located at 2619 West 10th Street. She noted that "black people are really getting it together and Robby's is the place to party," but not before she dispelled the notion that clubs were full of gangs, drunks, junkies and hold up artists. Unlike other clubs in town, Robby's returned to the basics, offering a small cover charge, a big dance floor, an emcee (Iron Jaw Memphis) and live local music.

soul in the city. People now went to clubs to hear songs as heard on the radio or at home. They no longer wanted live music, but rather deejays that spun hit records all night long. The clubs that still brought in live music demanded large bands with horn sections that could play the latest disco hits of the day by the Commodores, K.C. and the Sunshine Band, and Cameo. Guitarist Clint Jones remembered that disco put many Indianapolis musicians out of work because it was nearly impossible to get a well-paying gig. As a response, many musicians, including Jones, left Indianapolis to pursue their music career elsewhere.⁴⁷

Disco was a response to soul and funk in more than one way. As a more commercial sound, disco “bleached” soul and R&B and made black music more acceptable to middle class, white America. Growing out of the gay club scene, disco’s mindless, formulaic sound put a priority on dancing; songs with a message no longer had a place in popular music. Disco also “feminized” soul and R&B and gave women, their perspectives, and their experiences a stronger voice.⁴⁸ Women now had control over their own musical and cultural destiny. With an emphasis on dancing, love, and female desire, disco divas such as Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor, and Evelyn Champagne King recorded songs that spoke to female listeners who had been turned off by the overwhelming machismo that dominated early seventies black music and Blaxploitation films.⁴⁹ Disco spoke to women and homosexuals and then became a national phenomenon. It had roots in the black community’s soul and funk music and in the gay

⁴⁷ Interview, author with Clint Jones, December 16, 2002.

⁴⁸ Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 183-88. For more on disco’s effects on the demise of soul and R&B, see: Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (New York: Plume Books, 1988), 147-170.

⁴⁹ For more, please see Ward, *Just My Soul Responding*, 424-429; Vincent, *Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One*, 205-215.

club scene, but grew well beyond both. Disco had an open door policy that let everyone in; everyone, black or white, male or female, gay or straight, now had a place at the table. The soul and funk community had limited itself to a predominantly young, black audience that eventually turned into a young, black, male audience that oftentimes excluded women.

Throughout the late sixties and early seventies, from the tensions that tore at the seams of the black community, to the rise of Blaxploitation chic and eventually disco, Indianapolis nightclubs supported and promoted the black community. Early on, the nightclub scene reflected the moderation of the black community; later, it reflected the growing macho desires of Indianapolis black men and then the growing popularity of deejays and disco music. Although some clubs like the 20 Grand, Demonstrators Club, and most along Indiana Avenue eventually folded, new clubs took their place and gave patrons what they wanted, whether it be live soul and funk or a deejay that played Donna Summer records. The nightclub scene was the “cultural glue” that brought Indianapolis’ black community together throughout the late sixties and early seventies. The reinforcement of the values and beliefs of the black community was an important part of the nightclub experience. Club programming did not have to be overtly political or radical to mean something: it merely had to sustain the population.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of the sixties, popular songs by black performers rarely dealt with heavy issues such as black pride, unity, or Civil Rights, yet as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, popular song messages began to reflect the goals of the Movement. Songs such as Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come" and the Impressions' "Keep on Pushing" hit the airwaves in 1964 at a time when demonstrators and supporters of the Movement needed to be uplifted and supported. While freedom songs sustained demonstrators and marchers, pop songs on the radio had a much wider impact, reaching audiences throughout the country and alerting them to the efforts and trials of Movement organizers and participants.

During the late sixties and early seventies, the development of soul and funk music paralleled the changes in attitudes and values of many black Americans. As the era progressed, the music became heavier, funkier, and more aggressive, mimicking the dissent and frustration felt by many blacks during these years. The optimism and promises of the Civil Rights Movement seen at the outset of the sixties began to fade as many African Americans saw few changes in their own lives. Despite all his efforts, the peaceful preaching of Dr. Martin Luther King began to reach fewer and fewer people, as the militant ideologies of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and the Black Panthers found a culture looking for direction and answers. Blacks grew angrier about their position in American life as their economic, social, and political status saw little improvement as the sixties progressed. Violence began to erupt in urban areas like Watts, Newark, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., destroying property and lives. Divisions began to form in the African-American community among old and young, moderate and radical, and later,

men and women. Through it all, black popular music, especially R&B, soul, and funk, consistently reflected and supported the values, beliefs, and emotions of millions of African Americans.

At the forefront of the response to social and cultural changes was James Brown. Although Brown did not invent soul music, he was certainly the first to expand upon what already existed, create new sounds, and discuss previously untouchable topics such as black pride and unity in his songs. Brown was an innovator and his influence is visible in the recordings of many black performers on a national and regional level. Beginning in 1968 with “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud),” Brown’s music reflected the opinion of the majority of young African Americans who wanted to stand up for themselves. Brown’s music sustained and influenced a black population looking for direction after the deaths of King and Robert Kennedy, and as their emotions and views changed, so did Brown’s music. As Black Power grew in popularity, Brown’s music began to reflect a growing anger and frustration in the black community. Songs like “Get Up, Get Into It, Get Involved,” “Soul Power,” “Talkin’ Loud and Saying Nothing,” and “I Don’t Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing (Open Up the Door, I’ll Get It Myself)” spoke to an audience full of black pride and reinforced the belief that Black Power and self-determination could further enrich and enhance the black community.

Although Brown’s music still reflected the values and desires of a large number of young African Americans, by 1970-71 his sound had changed greatly. In early 1970, Brown fired his longtime band featuring Maceo Parker and Fred Wesley and hired a group of young and fiery musicians from the Cincinnati area. Known as the JBs, the group featured, among others, bassist Bootsy Collins. The marriage of Brown, Collins,

and the JBs ushered in funk, an offshoot of soul but with a raw, nasty edge that further reflected the growing dissension within the black community. Ever the businessman, Brown changed his sound to reflect this growing cynicism. The music of James Brown is a prime example of how music changes as tastes do. In 1968, listeners demanded a song like "Say it Loud," the first song to explicitly champion black pride and receive significant radio play. By 1971-72, Brown began to play heavy funk that expressed the anger that so many African Americans felt after the promises of Civil Rights and Black Power had failed. Songs no longer sought to uplift the black community through positive messages but rather to give blacks an escape from the tensions of rising violence, drug abuse, and joblessness. Brown responded and provided listeners with five minute escapes such as "Hot Pants," "Escape-ism," "Papa Don't Take No Mess," and "Think." Songs like these accompanied the growing popularity of Blaxploitation films and other entertainments that put blacks in positions of power and showed them "getting ahead" by any means necessary.

This progression in attitudes within the national black community and the coinciding changes in soul and funk music were also seen on a local, individual community level. While nightclubs and radio stations in Oakland or Los Angeles featured radical acts like the Last Poets or the Lumpen, local musicians, deejays, and club owners in Indianapolis provided entertainment that reflected and supported the moderate attitudes of the local black community.

Despite all the turmoil and tension present in Indianapolis during the late sixties and early seventies, the black community remained remarkably moderate in its political stance. The construction of I-65 and the IUPUI campus near the Indiana Avenue

neighborhood signaled a great change in the makeup of Indianapolis' black community. For nearly a century, the west side of Indianapolis had been home to the majority of the city's black community. The area was a commercial and cultural center, where African Americans went to purchase goods and services from black-owned businesses, meet their friends and neighbors, dine out, and hear live music. As the campus and the highway infringed on the neighborhood, thousands of African Americans moved out, or were forced out of the area. By the mid seventies, all that was left of the Indiana Avenue neighborhood were abandoned buildings, dilapidated homes, and a shattered legacy of what used to be. At the same time, the formation of Unigov, the linked city-county government, sapped African Americans of the political power that they had worked for so long to obtain. Unigov added nearly 250,000 new white voters, which grossly outnumbered the number of new black voters that came into the community. Blacks felt misrepresented and uncared for as the white-run city government focused on issues that did not address the immediate concerns of the black community.

As a whole, the black community was accepting of a wide variety of political beliefs, yet they never stood for violence, especially against those within the community. While other cities rioted, Indianapolis' black community practiced political moderation. After dealing with de facto segregation for nearly one hundred years, African Americans finally had obtained the freedom to live anywhere within the city of Indianapolis. Jobs were available and industries regularly hired African Americans with good wages and benefits. Perhaps most importantly, African Americans had room to spread out in Indianapolis. They were not stacked on top of one another in high-rise government housing, nor were they living in a downtrodden, inner city ghetto. Lockefield Gardens

was the biggest housing project in the city, yet the buildings were spread over several city blocks and there were trees, grassy fields, and playgrounds interspersed between them. Since unemployment rates were low, there were very few vagrants or loiterers seeking to cause trouble because most African Americans did not want to jeopardize their status and success within the city.

A constant in the black community during this era of tension and change was the many local soul and funk bands that played live in nightclubs throughout the city and released dozens of records. They reflected and supported the community's moderate political stance. The music uplifted listeners, made them dance, and helped them forget about their problems if only for a brief moment. Songs also contained positive messages that sought to improve the well being of the community and improve community pride and unity. Songs such as "Soul City," "Tightening Your Popcorn," and "Funky 16 Corners," all made listeners feel proud of being from "Naptown U.S.A.," a place where there is good music, good dancing, and most importantly, great people. Songs such as "Born Black" enlightened listeners to the struggles of being African American in this society yet made them feel proud for all they had accomplished. Songs like "Drugs Ain't Cool" and "The Kick" alerted the black community to a growing national and local drug epidemic. The songs not only helped listeners become aware of the problem, but also warned about the dangers of drug addiction. There were no songs released by Indianapolis musicians that threatened or alienated any section of the black population. Musicians sought "to do better by people," and wanted to improve life in Indianapolis rather than foment violence or anything could damage the well being of the black community.

In a variety of ways, locally produced soul and funk music served as the “cultural glue” that held much of Indianapolis’ black community together during the late sixties and early seventies. Records produced in Indianapolis were recorded by Indianapolis bands and released on Indianapolis record labels. Because the musicians, the producers, and the record company executives were from the local black community they understood the desires of the listeners. They knew what issues were important to the community and what types of songs were popular, and they geared their releases to cater to local record buyers. Local musicians were just “everyday people making records” and the messages in their songs resonated with an audience made up of family, friends, and neighbors.¹

As the hosts of live performances by local soul and funk bands, Indianapolis nightclubs achieved great importance during the late sixties and early seventies. Although the local nightclub scene had prospered during the thirties and forties when Indianapolis was nationally known for its jazz clubs and artists, by the mid-sixties the scene began to dwindle as club goers became disinterested in local music. National artists rarely passed through Indianapolis with the exception of a one-off date at the Walker Theatre, Bush Stadium, or the State Fair Coliseum. Beginning in 1967-68, as more talented bands took to the stage and local companies began to release records, interest in the local soul and funk scene increased dramatically. Local nightclubs resumed their role as cultural meeting places, where friends and neighbors met for live music and dancing. Nightclub programming, from live soul and funk music to exotic dancers, reflected and supported the entertainment desires of the local black community. Social clubs resumed booking meetings, dances, fundraisers, and matinees at nightclubs,

¹ Interview, author with James Bell, musician, December 9, 2002.

most of which featured live music from a local soul outfit. Many social clubs held charitable events at nightclubs that brought the local community together to help their own and generally improve life for all African Americans in the city.

Along with nightclubs, Indianapolis radio stations WTLC and WGEE supported the black community to a great extent by not only lending their airwaves to local political and spiritual leaders, but also by frequently playing locally produced soul and funk music on their airwaves. Local disc jockeys were the “gatekeepers” who decided what reached the ears of Indianapolis listeners, and more often than not, it was the music of local bands. Deejaays were sincere about their roles in the community and, like many deejaays of the late sixties and early seventies, felt it was their duty to encourage and uplift their listeners as well as local musicians. Many had a close relationship with the musicians and sought to help them in any way. By playing locally produced soul and funk music, WTLC and WGEE promoted local artists and brought black listeners together. The lyrics and messages in these songs hit home, whether they were heard in a car, at home, or in a nightclub.

Listeners could rely on deejaays like Spider Harrison, Paul Major, Rickie Clark, and Ralph Stone to tell like it was. Along with the printed word of the Indianapolis Recorder, WTLC and WGEE were the main sources of news that directly affected Indianapolis’ black community. If a deejay, news anchor, or talk show host learned of a malfeasance by local police or the city government, listeners could rely on the stations to tell them about it truthfully and honestly. Deejaays were heavily involved in the community, not just because station management required them to be, but also because they truly cared for the local black community. Their mere presence for a remote

broadcast at a local business or apartment complex gave instant credibility to that business.

The topic of how Indianapolis' black community and soul music coexisted is significant for several reasons. Using soul music to examine the political and cultural views of a specific metropolitan area has, to this point, never been done before. While some texts may examine the role of music in the history of Memphis, Detroit, or Chicago, rarely do they use the music produced, the backgrounds of the musicians and record producers, and the role of local radio to show how music both reflected and supported a community's politics. The music held even greater significance to Indianapolis listeners because musicians from their own community recorded it for the local audience. Indianapolis musicians wrote songs based on their knowledge of the local black community, their political and cultural values, and their desires and tastes. Songs like "Soul City" and "Tightening Your Popcorn," which explicitly champion Indianapolis residents' prowess as partiers and dancers, would have not gone over well in Atlanta or Dallas. The local, regional flair in many of these songs, combined with the notion that the musicians were an important part of the community, are what made the Indianapolis soul and funk scene so important to the black community. It spoke directly to and for them.

Another reason why this examination of the Indianapolis soul and funk scene is significant is because it shows how the theories of William Van Deburg and Brian Ward, among others, play out on a local level. While these authors clearly indicate the importance of soul and funk music in sustaining the national black population through an era of tension and change, they do not delve into analysis on a community-by-community

level. Van Deburg's idea of how soul and funk music were "cultural glue," how the music brought African Americans together in a physical and spiritual sense, is the jumping off point for this paper. In Indianapolis, where there were a number of popular local musicians and an abundance of locally produced soul and funk recordings, soul and funk music did a tremendous amount for the local black community. Not only did the music bring people together at nightclubs and dances, but also when they purchased records at the Ayr-Way Soul Browser Center and listened to WTLC and WGEE at home or in their car.

While Van Deburg champions the ability of soul and funk music to bring people together, Brian Ward has a slightly different perspective. Ward contends that early on, the Civil Rights Movement was making significant gains, most African Americans were on the same page, and soul provided the demonstrators with a unifying message of freedom. However, as Black Power emerged and the promises of Civil Rights failed, soul and funk music changed to suit the growing frustrations and macho desires of black males. Indianapolis provides an excellent illustration of Ward's theory as nightclub programming began to suit the machismo and sexual desires of Indianapolis' black male population. Nightclub contests and matinees frequently featured "Hot Pants" contests, "Loose Booty" competitions, or the infamous "Braless Ball and Dance" put on by the 20 Grand Ballroom in 1973. Although women received cash or prizes for their efforts, these contests were solely for the enjoyment of black men, most of who felt frustrated about their position in life. Unemployment rates began to rise in Indianapolis by 1973-74, putting many more people out of work. Unigov had sapped the black populace of significant political power and it became difficult for black men to achieve upward

mobility. They took their frustrations to the local nightclubs, which, as they had always done, reflected and supported the majority opinions and taste of the black community.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this work is the significance it lends to soul and funk music as an important and vital part of Civil Rights era black culture. Scholars such as Ward, Van Deburg, Peter Guralnick, Michael Haralambos, Nelson George, and Mark Anthony Neal have all argued for the significance of soul music and its role during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. All agree that soul music played an important role in uplifting the spirits of not just demonstrators but millions of African Americans who felt oppressed, unappreciated, and neglected. Soul performers played a key role in this as well, as James Brown, Aretha Franklin, and Curtis Mayfield, among others, became vital spokespeople for the black community. Performers encouraged listeners to express pride in their blackness, to be successful, give back to their community, and stand up for what they believed. Audiences could look at the success of James Brown, and be proud of him for what he accomplished. In return, Brown hoped that his success would inspire others to do well in their lives, maybe not as soul and funk performers, but as businessmen, teachers, or politicians. Soul meant something to African Americans. It was *their* music, made for black people by black people, or as disc jockey Jeffrey Troy noted, “Soul music maintains a hell of a lot of importance because it is one of the very few things in this country that the black man can say is his.”²

The sentiments expressed above were not lost on Indianapolis audiences. Indianapolis’ black community understood the importance of soul music and relished in

² Michael Haralambos, Soul Music: The Birth of a Black Sound in America (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 131.

its blackness. Local black musicians played soul and funk music for an overwhelmingly black audience at nightclubs in predominantly black neighborhoods. WTLC and WGEE were the only stations in Indianapolis that played their music. Stores such as the Ayr-Way Soul Browser Center, Daphne's, and Arlene's House of Music, all located in heavily black areas, sold their records. The lyrics and music catered to their desires and tastes as listeners. The messages in the songs were relevant to their lives. The songs uplifted their spirits and increased pride in their community, but most importantly, the music helped ease the tensions in the black community.

Eventually, all the nightclubs along Indiana Avenue closed down. The few nightclubs that remained in Indianapolis were spread throughout the city. Storefronts were boarded up and the last few residents left or were forced out as the IUPUI campus continued to expand. Even Arlene's House of Music, one of the stalwart businesses on the Avenue and one of few record stores that catered to an exclusively African-American customer base, closed in the late eighties after nearly thirty years of service. All that was left of the legacy of Indiana Avenue was the Walker Theatre, which itself went through an extensive renovation project. The last nightclub remaining on the Avenue is at 361 Indiana Avenue, where the J&J Lounge formerly sat. Currently, it is home to a nightclub that features weekly jazz concerts, a small but important homage to the rich history of the area. Despite the parking lots, apartment buildings, and strip malls that now line the Avenue, a live music bar can still survive.

As clubs along Indiana Avenue began to close, so did nightclubs in other areas of the city as well. By 1974, the 20 Grand, the Demonstrators, and other nightclubs had closed. The Inn Crowd Lounge on Commerce was one of the few nightclubs to advertise

in the Recorder and regularly feature live music. Live bands began to fall out of favor with Indianapolis audiences, who began to prefer deejays who played disco or dance records, which club owners loved because deejays cost much less than a band. Musical tastes also changed. No longer did Indianapolis want to hear classic soul music, but rather preferred the full band sounds of Earth, Wind, and Fire and Kool and the Gang.

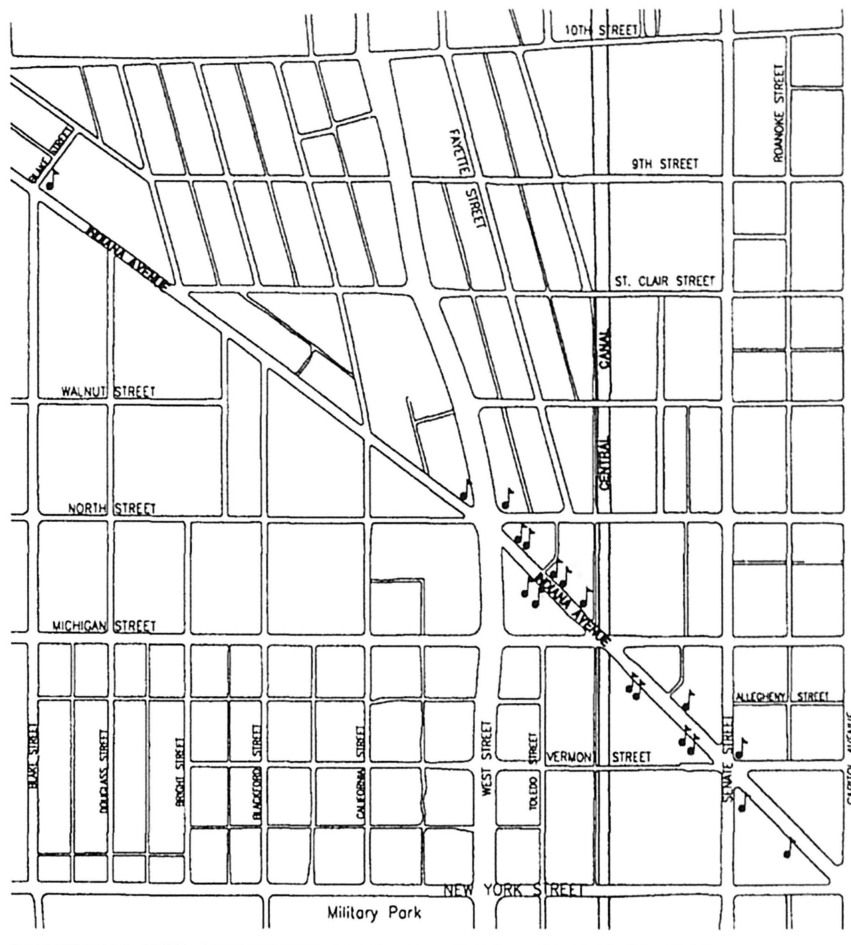
Local bands could not compete simply because club owners did not have the money to pay eight or ten piece bands for regular gigs. As a result, many musicians stopped performing altogether or moved to where they were able to make a living. Clint Jones moved to Los Angeles to pursue his music career and ended up traveling to and making a living in Australia and Japan as a musician. Rodney Stepp became the musical director for the Spinners, a job he held until the eighties. James Bell continued his work as a master plumber and occasionally performed with a new band, the Naptown Players. Bell and his group, along with several other bands from Indianapolis, regularly toured in the northeastern United States and the maritime provinces of Canada in 1972 and 1973. The Rhythm Machine left town completely in the mid-seventies and made Des Moines, Iowa their new home. Manchild, one of the best young bands in Indianapolis, left the city in the mid-seventies for Los Angeles, and eventually earned a record contract. The band featured a young guitarist named Kenneth Edmonds, who later made his name and fortune as a songwriter for some of the biggest names in pop and R&B. Although these musicians left the city, they helped turn Indianapolis into a hotbed of soul and funk music during the late sixties and early seventies. While “Naptown” never reached the level of national prominence or influence of Memphis or Detroit, the city’s music scene sustained

and enriched the local black community, and local musicians played an instrumental role in that.

The activity surrounding the African-American soul and funk scene in Indianapolis during the late sixties and early seventies exemplified what was happening on a national level. Soul and funk music sustained the black population during an era of great turmoil and tension. While national conflicts and issues affected the Indianapolis black community, local issues affected them to an even greater extent, as the construction of I-65, the infringement of the IUPUI campus, the formation of Unigov, and housing desegregation all directly affected the lives of thousands of African Americans. Indianapolis' black community remained moderate and non-violent throughout these conflicts, preferring to improve their community through social club involvement and charitable actions with the positive messages of locally produced soul and funk as the soundtrack.

APPENDIX A

Map 1
Location of Indiana Avenue Music Venues, 1925-1950



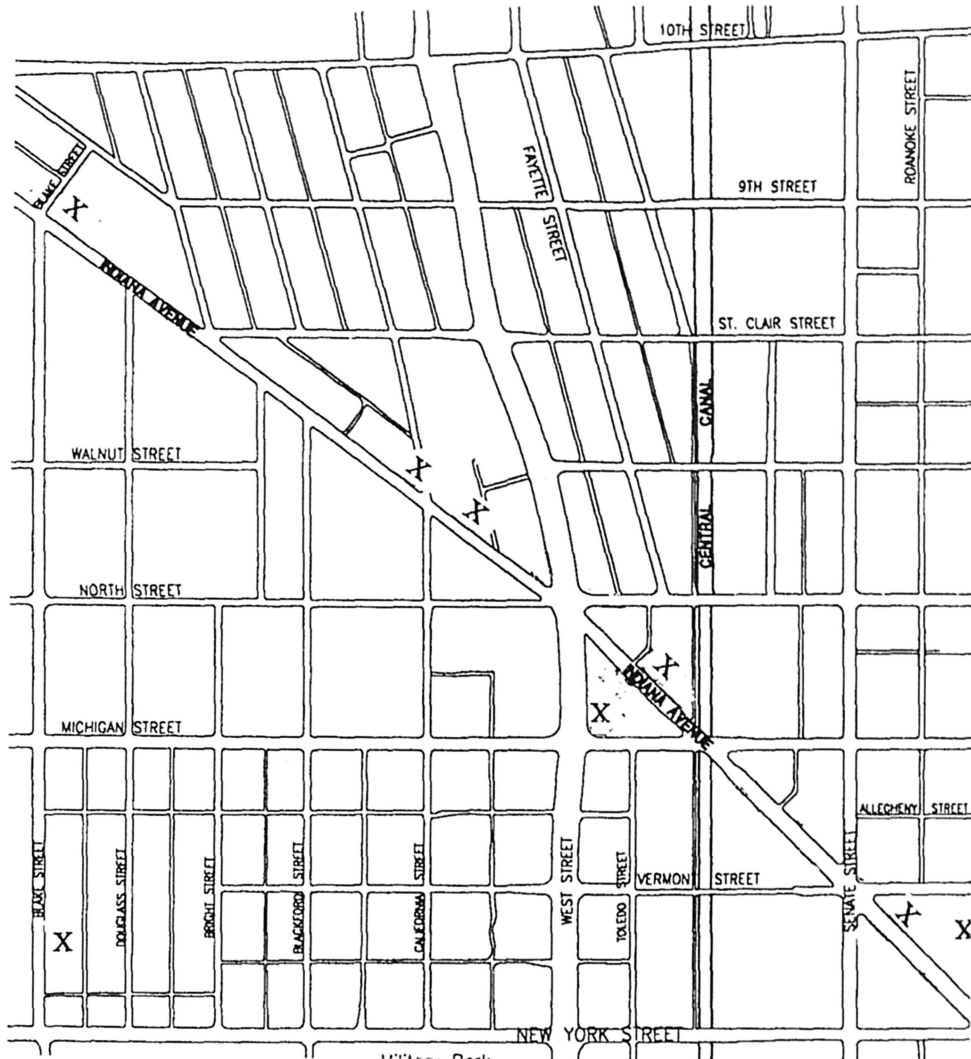
Music note = nightclub

Research by: Amy Wilson

Drawn by: Sarah Weinkauff, AIA

Source: Amy Wilson, "The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue: A Cultural History of Indianapolis' African-American Jazz Scene, 1933-1950" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1997), xiii.

Map 2
Location of Indiana Avenue Music Venues, 1968-1974



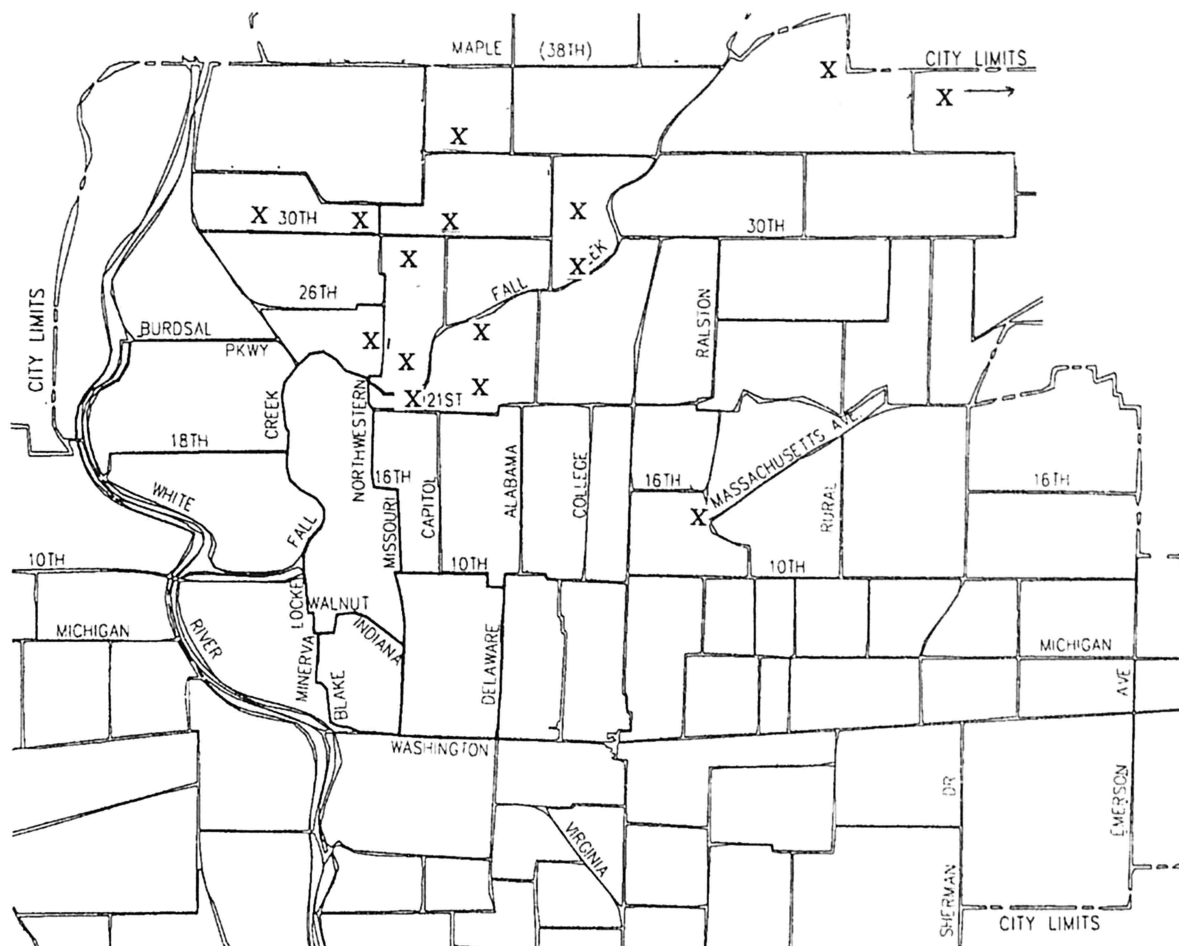
x = Nightclub

Research by: Jeff Kollath

Drawn by: Sarah Weinkauf, AIA

Format adapted from: Amy Wilson, "The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue: A Cultural History of Indianapolis' African-American Jazz Scene, 1933-1950" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1997).

Map 3



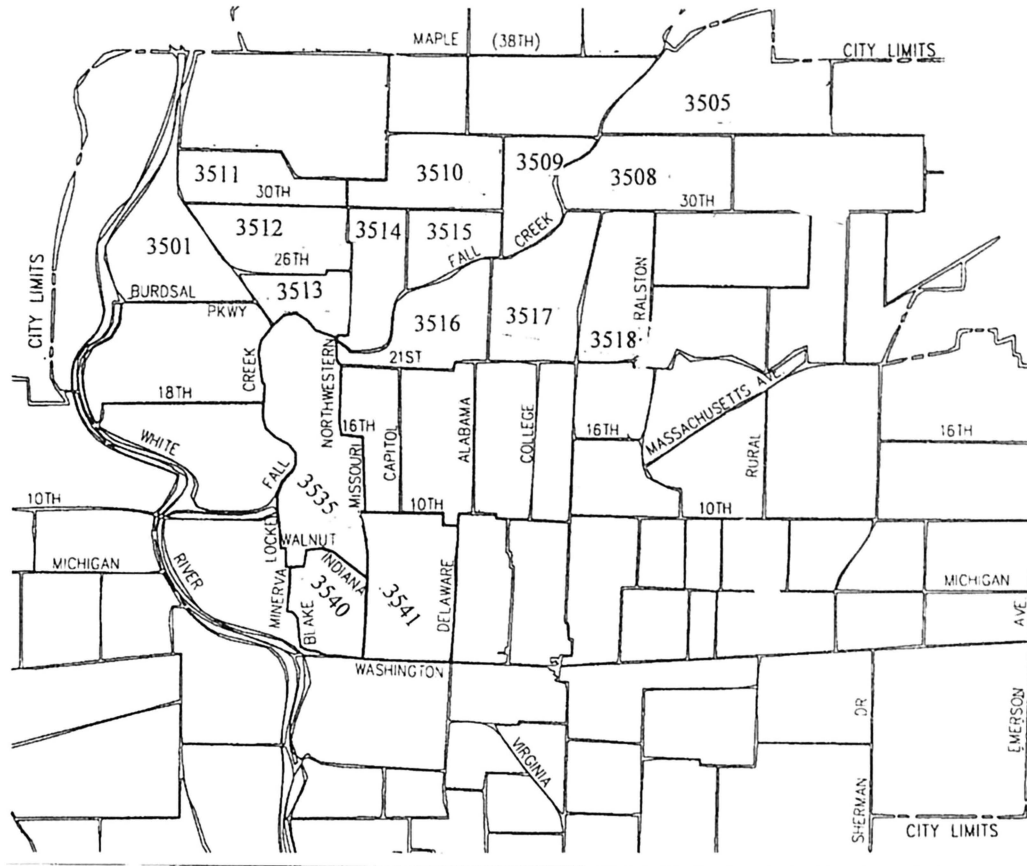
x = Nightclub

Research by: Jeff Kollath

Drawn by: Sarah Weinkauff, AIA

Format adapted from: Amy Wilson, "The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue: A Cultural History of Indianapolis' African-American Jazz Scene, 1933-1950" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1997).

Boundaries for Census Tracts, 1960 and 1970



Research by: Jeff Kollath
Drawn by: Sarah Weinkauff, AIA

Format adapted from: Amy Wilson, "The Swing Era on Indiana Avenue: A Cultural History of Indianapolis' African-American Jazz Scene, 1933-1950" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1997).

APPENDIX B



Figure 1: Billy Ball and the Upsetters featuring Roosevelt Matthews, circa 1968.
Stones Throw Records.



Figure 2: Billy Ball and the Upsetters, circa 1970.
Notice the change in hairstyle and clothing.
Photo courtesy of Jason Yoder.



THE RYTHM MACHINE

*RODAN RECORDS
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.*

Figure 3: The Rhythm Machine. Promotional photo for release of "Freakish Love." Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society.



Figure 4: Big Daddy Graham at an unidentified nightclub. Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society.



Figure 5: The Fabulous Moonlighters, one of Indianapolis' most popular soul and funk bands. Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society.



Figure 6: The Vanguards, the pride and joy of Herb Miller's LAMP label. Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society.



Figure 7: Billy Wooten, live at the 19th Hole.
Stones Throw Records.



Figure 8: The Highlighters, circa 1970.
Singer James Bell is on the far right.
Stones Throw Records.

ayr-way

have you heard????

WTLC
Stereo 105

**SOUL BROWSER
CENTER**

Is At
Ayr-Way West 2333
Lafayette Road

ONLY

Spin In Today...and **SAVE**
Any 45 RPM In Our Top-48
Browser Section Only

69¢ ea.

Be sure to pick up your
WTLC Weekly Survey...
IT'S FREE!

WTLC Top 48 Browser Furnished and Stocked
By Indianapolis Record Distributing Company

Figure 9: Advertisement for the Ayr-Way Soul Browser Center, Indianapolis Recorder, March 20, 1971,

20 GRAND SHOW LOUNGE

115 1/2 WEST 34th. ST.

— PRESENTS —

FROM MOTOWN

THE ORIGINALS

SINGING THEIR MILLION SELLER. "THE BELLS" — BABY I'M FOR REAL"

COMPLETE WITH BIG BAND AND SHOW

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

THE BEAUTIFUL
BELITA WOODS

ARETHA FRANKIN
FEMALE TRIO

**SWEETHEARTS
OF SOUL**

PLUS
THE COUNTRY'S HEAVIEST
JOCK & M.C.

"SPIDER"
OF WTLC-RADIO

NEW BEGINNING
**7 BIG
DAYS**
MON., JULY 19
THRU
SUN., JULY 25

SPECIAL DAYS

TUES. NITE
"OPERATION BREAD BASKET SPECIAL"

WED. NITE
LADIES NIGHT ADM. \$1.00

THURS. NITE
WTLC LIVE BROADCAST

SAT. MATINEE 3-7 p.m. COUPLES \$5.00

SAT. NITE — EXTRA HOUR OF
ENTERTAINMENT UNTIL 3 a.m.

TEENAGE SPECIAL SUNDAY — 7 p.m. —

12 MIDNIGHT BIG "HOT PANTS" CONTEST

TIME: MON. — FRI. 9 p.m. TO 2 a.m.

* REG. ADM. \$3.50 * PATROLLED PARKING AREA * B.Y.B.

A UNIVERSAL PROMOTIONS PRODUCTION

Figure 10: Advertisement for the 20 Grand Ballroom, Indianapolis Recorder, July 17, 1971. Note the WTLC live broadcast and the Operation Breadbasket fundraiser.

Braless BALL
CONTEST AND DANCE
 FEATURING THE
BAR-KAYS

BILLY BALL
and the
UPSETTERS
BAND

THE LOVELY
SHADES of
BROWN

20 GRAND BALL ROOM
SAT. FEB. 10TH • 2 SHOWS •
 9:12 & 12:30 Till

★ **CASH PRIZES** ★

TICKETS AT... KARLS QUICK CLEANERS •
 SPIDERS RECORDS • UPTOWN GRILL • LEONS BARBER SHOP
 • DISCOUNT RECORDS • PEGGIES RECORDS • ARLEANS RECORDS

Figure 11: Advertisement for the 20 Grand Ballroom, Indianapolis Recorder, February 9, 1973.



Figure 12: Patrons at the Demonstrators Club,
1971, Indianapolis Recorder Collection,
Indiana Historical Society.



Figure 13: 1974 advertisement for the “Loose Booty” competition and dance at the Inn Crowd Lounge, Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society.

APPENDIX C

List of Nightclubs in Indianapolis, 1968-1974

This list, culled from advertisements in the Indianapolis Recorder or listings in the city directories, contains nightclubs that hosted live music during the late sixties and early seventies.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| The 19th Hole | 2901 Harding Street. Owned by Janie Robinson. Mainly featured jazz and soul-jazz. Billy Wooten recorded “Wooden Glass – Live at the 19 th Hole” at the club in 1972. Closed in February 1974. |
| The 20 Grand Ballroom | 115 ½ W. 34 th Street. Managed by James Turnbo. The largest nightclub in Indianapolis, located in an old bowling alley. Able to hold nearly 1,000 patrons. Featured both local and national acts in War, Parliament Funkadelic, Maceo and All His King’s Men, and Rufus Thomas. |
| Al’s British Lounge | 643 Indiana Avenue. Owned by Al Coleman. Featured traditional jazz, including Coleman’s own group, The 3 Souls. One of the nicest clubs along Indiana Avenue. Geared towards “sophisticated clientele.” |
| Barrington Lounge | 2501 E. Minnesota Street. Located on the southeast side of Indianapolis. Drew patrons from that area of town, but also troops from Fort Benjamin Harrison. Featured jazz and soul, including house band Chico and the Soul Senders. |
| The Blue Eagle | 701 Indiana Avenue. One of the longest running nightclubs in Indianapolis, opening in 1936. The Fabulous Moonlighters and Ebony Rhythm Funk Campaign regularly played here. Also started a record company that released several soul and gospel records. Later known as Billy Mac’s Lounge. |

The Cat's Meow	38 th and Arlington. Also known as Someplace Else. Home to the 1973 "Mack of the Year" contest with music presented by the Kool People of Terre Haute.
Demonstrators Club	2917 Central Avenue. Ran in concert with the Demonstrators social club. Known for its lavish interior and lighting, the club seated nearly 800 patrons. Home to the annual Miss Demonstrators beauty pageant. National artists such as Solomon Burke, Al Green, Eddie Harris, and Groove Holmes all played live at the club.
Down Beat Lounge	971 Indiana Avenue. Located at the north end of Indiana Avenue, this club mainly hosted jazz and rarely advertised in the <u>Recorder</u> .
The Famous Door	252 N. Capitol Avenue. Also known as the Pink Poodle and the Zanzibar Lounge. In 1971 and 72, the club hosted several female impersonator revues and contests, as well as a "Male Hot Pants" contest.
The Flame	242 Blake Street. Owned by Harvey Anderson (as of 1968). Located south of Indiana Avenue, where the IUPUI campus now sits. Very popular club that regularly featured Billy Ball and the Upsetters. Fire caused by faulty wiring briefly closed the club in March 1968, but later reopened in late April.
The Ghunga Den	825 W. 30 th Street. Also known as the Honeydripper. Owned by John Hindman. In April 1968, the club presented "Soul Night Monday" with WGEE-AM deejay Paul Major.
The Hub-Bub Lounge	124 W. 30 th Street. Owned by Patricia Braswell. Mainly featured jazz.
J&J Lounge	364 Indiana Avenue. Opened in June 1967. "The place where all the good fellas meet." Occasionally featured live music, especially in the late sixties. Brought Major Lance, one of the very few national acts to Indiana Avenue, in 1969.

Jimmy's Club 21	305 West 21 st Street. Owned by James Howell. Located north of the Indiana Avenue neighborhood. Known as the "Hottest Little Spot in Town." Regularly featured the Big Daddy Graham Trio. The club closed and was torn down when interstate construction began in 1968-69.
Kendricks Show Lounge	23 rd and Meridian Streets. Partially owned by Jimmy Guilford, owner of the Soul City nightclub.
Kew Pee Doll Lounge	2949 Central Avenue. Known as "The Place Where Good Friends Have Good Times."
Neto's Lounge	Meadows Shopping Center on the east side. Owned by former Indiana Pacer Bob Netolicky.
The Place to Play	530 Indiana Avenue. One of the most popular clubs along the Avenue.
Queen of Clubs Lounge	518 N. West Street. Regularly featured local bands and an extravagant floor show featuring exotic dancers. Blue Note recording artists Freddie Roach and his band played here in 1968.
Soul City	1435 Commerce Street. Owned by Jimmy Guilford. Held over 300 people and featured such national acts as Clarence Carter, Eddie Floyd, Joe Simon, and the Five Stairsteps. Later known as the Inn Crowd Lounge.
Surfside 7	532 W. 24 th Street. The place where one could "Meet Your Friends in a Warm Friendly Atmosphere." Featured live music and a floor show at least five nights a week during latter part of 1968.

APPENDIX D

Indianapolis Soul and Funk Recordings

Courtesy Jason Yoder, reprinted with permission

This represents the large majority of soul and funk records recorded in Indianapolis or recorded by Indianapolis musicians. From 1968 to 1974, Indianapolis artists released nearly fifty records, most of which were recorded at Les Ohmit's studio at 6102 East Tenth Street. Because these records were rarely distributed on a national level and sold in small quantities, they are difficult to locate and there may be several that are missing from this list. Nevertheless, these recordings represent Indianapolis' black community during this era of turbulence and tension and further reflect the community's political and cultural moderation.

BAND	SIDE A	SIDE B
LAMP RECORDS		
The Vanguard	Somebody Please	I Can't Use You Girl
Ebony Rhythm Band	Soul Heart Transplant	Drugs Ain't Cool
Allison & Calvin Turner	Shake What Your Mamma Gave You	Yeah, Memories
The Diplomats ¹	Hum Bug, Part 1	Hum Bug, Part 2
The Vanguard	The Thought of Losing Your Love	It's Too Late For Love
The Pearls	Can I Call You Baby?	Shooting High
The Moonlighters	Lonely Baby	Right On Brother
The Vanguard	The Thought of Losing Your Love	It's Too Late For Love
The Vanguard	Girl Go Away (It's Wrong to Love)	Man Without Knowledge
The Moonlighters	More Than I Can Stand	Just Like She Said She Would
The Montiques	Fool Am I	Take Another Look
Squidd ²	Mystic Illusion	High On A Hill
Orange Wedge ³	Prejudice and Discrimination	Reject Me Not
The Vanguard	The Thought of Losing Your Love	Before You Take Another Step, Girl
P.H.D.s	Swells My Desire	The Way It Used To Be
The Amnesty	Everybody Wants To Be Free, Part 1	Everybody Wants To Be Free, Part 2
Tony Black and the	Go To Work	Huh?
Revolution Compared to What		
The Indys ⁴	Come See About Her	Another Weekend
The Vanguard	Falling Out of Love	Gotta Have Love
Funder Cooper	I've Got To Get Around	I Didn't Know (Don't Shoot Me)
The Vanguard	Good Times, Bad Times	Man Without Knowledge
Words of Wisdom ⁵	You Made Me Everything	Do You Understand Me Now?
Billy Ball & the Upsetters	Carmel Corn	Soul For Sale

APOLLO RECORDS

Billy Ball & the Upsetters

Sissy Walk

Popcorn '69

BLUE EAGLE RECORDS⁶

Four Sensations

Only Love Up Ahead

Born Black

The Fabulous Moonlighters

I've Lost Again

For Granted

The Fabulous Moonlighters

Funky Moon Meditation, Part 1

Masquerade Is Over

The Fabulous Moonlighters

Cold and Funky, Part 1

Cold and Funky, Part 2

The Fabulous Moonlighters

Walk On By, Part 1

Walk On By, Part 2

C.A.M. ASSOCIATION

Big Daddy Graham Trio⁷

Tightening Your Popcorn

Pretty Little Girl of Mine

Mr. Gee & the Fifth Generation

We Got A Funky Feeling, Part 1

We Got A Funky Feeling, Part 2

DELUXE RECORDS⁸

Billy Ball & the Upsetters

African Suspense

Come On Home

The Presidents

I Want My Baby

Gold Walk

The Presidents

Snoopy

Stinky

The Presidents

Peter Rabbit

Which Way

The Presidents

Our Meeting

Lovers Psalm

IX CHAINS RECORDS

Words of Wisdom

Friend of Mine (Stereo Mix)

Friend of Mine (Instrumental)

KNAPTOWN RECORDS

The Sentimentals

I Know You Too Well

Now It's Here

Jazzie Cazzie & the Eight Sounds⁹

Young Girl

Soul City

People In The News

Misty Shade of Pink

Color Me

LULU RECORDS

Allison & Calvin Turner

Yeah, Memories

Shake What Your Mamma Gave You

Allison & Calvin Turner

It's Over Between Us

What Is This?

Spider Harrison¹⁰

Beautiful Day

Never In My Life

The Highlighters

Having a Little Faith

Theme From Nap

Rhythm Machine

The Kick, Part I

The Kick, Part II

Rhythm Machine

Brenda and Me

Put A Smile On Time

Calvin Turner & Bad News

After All

Gotta Have My Baby Back

Rhythm Machine¹¹

You Got Action, You Got Me

Brenda and Me

Lil's Place

Everybody's Chippin'

Put A Smile On Time

You Make Me Feel Right

Thought My Love Was Fine

Can't Do Without You

RODAN RECORDS

Rhythm Machine

Freakish Love

Whatcha Gonna Do

ROJAM RECORDS¹²

The Highlighters

Poppin' Popcorn

Amazing Love

3 DIAMONDS RECORDS¹³

The Highlighters¹⁴

Funky 16 Corners, Part 1

Funky 16 Corners, Part 2

The Highlighters¹⁵

Trying to Get Chosen

The Love of My Girl

¹ Also known as the Diplomats Show Band. Just before the band went into the studio, they discovered that another band had been registered as the Diplomats and recorded some years earlier. This is the only time the band was known as the Diplomatics. Interview, author with Rodney Stepp, February 3, 2003.

² Psychedelic, acid rock band.

³ Spoken word recording by David Capps.

⁴ One of the only all-female singing groups in Indianapolis. The Sentimentals were a male/female duo, while the Pearls featured Allen King on lead vocals with three women on backup vocals.

⁵ Produced by WTLC-FM deejay Rickie Clark.

⁶ Owned by the same group that owned the Blue Eagle nightclub located at 701 Indiana Avenue.

⁷ Features Baby Leon, vocalist from the Presidents, on vocals.

⁸ Deluxe was subsidiary of King Records in Cincinnati. Most likely, these records were not recorded in Indianapolis.

⁹ Featuring the Diplomatics' Rodney Stepp on keyboards. The band was named for former University of Michigan basketball star, Cazzie Russell.

¹⁰ Harrison was the number one deejay at WTLC-FM and occasionally performed this song live at area nightclubs.

¹¹ Released in 1975 when the band resided in Des Moines, Iowa. To date, this is the only known LP released by an Indianapolis soul and funk band.

¹² Owned by WGEE-AM deejay Paul Major. Recorded at Midwest Studios, 6030 East 30th Street in Indianapolis.

¹³ Located at 2851 North Lasalle Street, Indianapolis.

¹⁴ Music by the Highlighters Band, lyrics by James Bell.

¹⁵ Music by the Highlighters Band, lyrics by James Bell.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Jeffrey J. Kollath

EDUCATION:

2000-2003 Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI),
M.A. in History

1996-2000 University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, B.S. in History

EXPERIENCE:

2002-2003 Intern, Indiana Medical History Museum, Indianapolis. Coordinate/
facilitate tours of a 106-year old medical research facility at the former
Indiana Hospital for the Insane. Create public programming based on
primary sources about the history of mental illness and the public health
movement in the United States. Install permanent art collections and
design future flat exhibits. Work with loan agreements for the museum's
vast artifact collection and paperwork for donations to the collection.
Work with all age groups from primary school children to the elderly.

2001-2003 Intern/Contract Employee, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.
Research, create, organize, and present public programs for patrons of all
ages. Specific activities include: story/craft hour for preschoolers,
monthly family programs on topics relevant to Indiana history, and
presentations on the lives of Cole Porter and Hoagy Carmichael. In Fall
2001, presented lecture topics to middle school students on Indiana's anti-
war movements and students' rights. Gave tours of the society's A
Working Life and 5 Unsettling Stories exhibits and hosted weekly
showings of documentaries related to Indiana history.

2001
Summer Contract Researcher, Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest,
Clermont, KY. Worked with Isaac W. Bernheim Foundation in
researching pre-settlement vegetation in and around the Bernheim
Research Forest area. Research focused on survey records from the late
eighteenth century, with over 200 examined for certain species of trees.
Examined several eighteenth century travel journals. Bernheim is using
the research for a restoration project that will result in the seeding of 100
acres with native Kentucky plants and trees.

- 2000-2002 Intern/Contract Employee, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.
Aided in the development and fabrication of both the A Working Life and 5 Unsettling Stories exhibitions. Completed primary source research on a variety of Indiana history topics, including the history of Brown County. Selected photographs and designed layout for the Ben Winans exhibit in the East Gallery of the Indiana History Center. Assisted in writing for museum scripts, registering artifacts, and the role and function and design within a museum setting. Utilized graphic design software used for printing exhibit text labels and vinyl lettering.
- 2000 Mississippi Valley Archaeological Center (MVAC), La Crosse, WI.
Spring Conducted research for several MVAC projects including a survey of all the remaining Army air bases located in Nebraska and an architectural survey of several small Minnesota towns. Mainly utilized primary sources. Wrote lengthy introductions for larger projects submitted by MVAC consultants to clients.
- 1999-2000 University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, La Crosse, WI.
Worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on the history of the environment along the Mississippi River, specifically the Trempealeau, Wisconsin area. Conducted several oral history interviews, attended meetings with the DNR regarding environmental policy and a river habitat conference in April 1999. The results of my work were published in the university's Journal of Undergraduate Research and are being used as a chapter in an upcoming book about the environmental history of the Mississippi River.

PUBLICATIONS:

"The Environmental History of the Upper Mississippi River at Trempealeau, WI," Journal of Undergraduate Research (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 2000).

"Plutarch and His Contemporaries: A Historiographical Essay," University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Journal of History (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 2001).

ACTIVITIES:

- 2003 Presented paper titled "On Behalf of Suffering Humanity: Dr. John
Spring Evans, Dorothea Dix, and the Treatment of the Mentally Ill in Indiana, 1840-1850" at the Indiana Association of Historians conference in Richmond.

1998-1999 Heavily involved with the Powell/Hood Park neighborhood in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Performed and transcribed oral history interviews with several area residents. Designed, selected images for, and partially fabricated a photo display illustrating the history of the neighborhood for placement in the La Crosse Public Library and the brand new Powell/Hood Park Community Center.

**MUSEUM/PUBLIC HISTORY
COURSE WORK:**

- Graduate Seminar in Public History
- Topics: Material History
- Topics: Local and Community History

RELATED HISTORY COURSE WORK:

- Research Seminar in Indiana History
- 20th Century U.S. History Colloquium
- U.S. History Since World War II